

JACK MORGAN

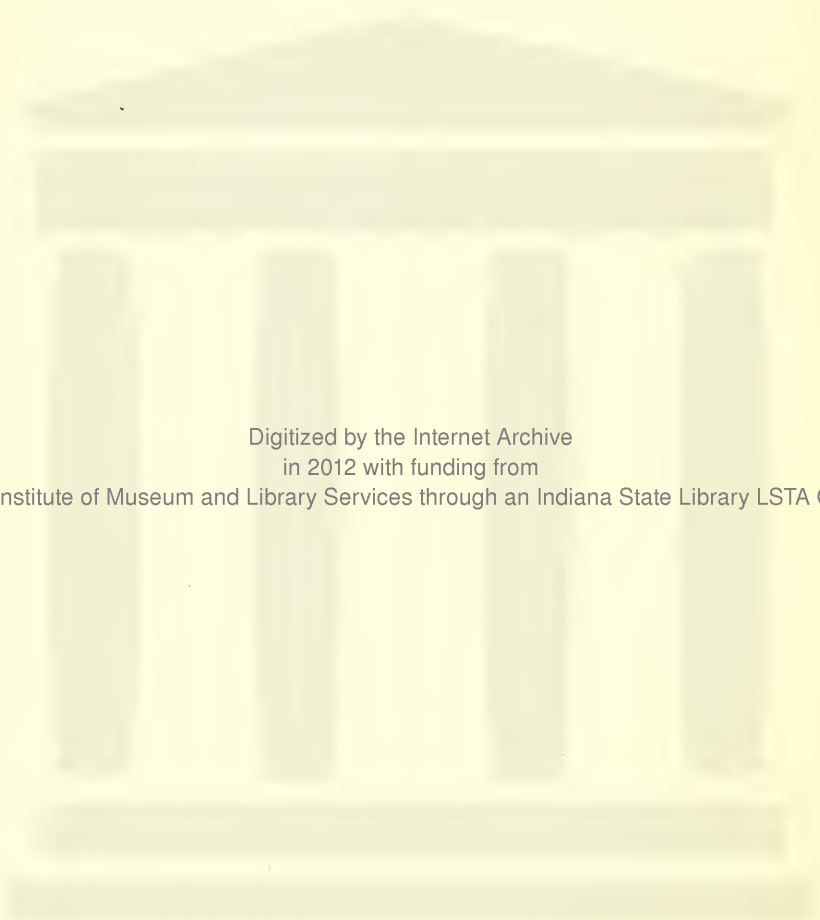
A Boy of 1812



W. O. STODDARD

Ralph
"
from his Father.

Christmas
1901.
J. C. Standard



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“THERE STOOD PERRY, AS RESOLUTE AS AT THE BEGINNING.”
(See page 323.)

JACK MORGAN

A BOY of 1812

BY W. O. STODDARD



AUTHOR of "THE NOANK'S LOG," "GUERT
TEN EYCK," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY
WILL CRAWFORD

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P R E F A C E

THERE are historical accounts of the second war between the United States and Great Britain from which erroneous ideas of both its management and importance might easily be obtained. The latter could not well be overestimated, and the defects of the former can be entirely accounted for. Our system of government, legislative and executive, was new and not yet developed for perfect work.

There were no shortcomings on our side, however, whether of our President and his councillors or of Congress, which were not matched in the remarkable record left behind it by the British ministry. If our own armies were not well supplied and if some of our generals were badly treated, it should also be said that the British forces in Canada and on the Lakes received but small assistance after winning their primary successes. Their final defeat seems to have been provided for

Preface

in London. So was the concluding blunder, by which it was arranged that the battle of New Orleans should be fought and a British army thrown away after a treaty of peace had been signed.

The story of the war in the west and on the Lakes can hardly be told too often. It is full of patriotic, heroic lessons. It cannot be understood at all, however, without keeping in mind the fact that at the outbreak of the war there was no United States, for war purposes, north of Kentucky, and west of a line drawn down through the middle of Ohio. All west of that line was debatable land swarming with angry redmen. This nation should keep forever green its memories of such men as Harrison, Jackson, Chauncey, Perry, and others, to whom it is indebted for the freedom of the Great Lakes, for the Mississippi Valley, and, therefore, for the Rocky Mountains, the Pacific slope, and the islands of the sea.

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JACK MORGAN

A BOY of 1812

CHAPTER I

Three Councils of War

“**W**HOOP! Whoop! Whoop!”
Yell answered yell, with varied expressions of triumph or ferocity, and a number of dark forms were stalking hither and thither near a huge and very smoky bonfire. Around this was an open space, as of cleared land, dotted with stumps. Beyond and around this clearing were the black shadows of the leafless winter forest. Out of the forest darkness came now another whoop, long, shrill, vibrating, and this was followed by a piercing cry of pain and a voice that became at once inarticulate.

The bonfire was large, for it was made of a log dwelling, a barn, and some ricks of hay and straw close to them. Not far from it had been kindled smaller fires, and at these rude cookery went on; a freshly killed ox had provided abundant beef, and a Shawnee war-party, striking a settler's cabin in the night, might well be hungry.

This, therefore, was a feast on a foray; and it was also a council of war, for sharp discussions were going on, and there were differing opinions as to the next action to be taken. Only a brief interruption occurred when a tall warrior walked on into the fire-light, sending before him again the scalp-whoop of his tribe, and brandishing the bloody trophy he had just captured.

"One!" he said. "No men in woods. Ugh! Take Morgan place, now."

He was addressing a man in a red uniform who came forward to meet him, and he was answered:—

"Too far, to-night. Sleep now. Get there to-morrow."

"Ugh! Ugh! Go now!" urged one red

man after another; but the man in uniform had on his side of the argument the fires, the fresh beef, and the general weariness resulting from a long march over the snow.

A narrow and winding road led northward from the burning cabin council-fire. On this road, only just far enough away to suggest the idea of probable escape, a heavily loaded sleigh, drawn by two horses, was slipping slowly along. It halted on the top of a hill, as if to rest the team, and the man who was driving them stood up to look back.

"Betty Stowell!" he shouted. "The redskins have got there! It's burnin'!"

She also stood up, and a mass of long gray hair escaped from under her hood as she shook her fist toward a red glow above the southward trees.

"Oh! the wolves!" she screamed. "All our hard work for four years is gone. I wish we could ha' saved the cows and oxen."

"Too late, Betty," he said. "We didn't but jest get away in time. All we can do is to push on to Morgan's. We may have to fight, too, before we get there."

"Joe," she said, "it's awful! If Abner Jessup was really comin' back, they may ha' taken him."

The only answer of the old man was a suppressed groan, but they both sat down, and the lash fell sharply upon the horses. It may be that the cry of agony in the darkness beyond the burning cabin had been uttered by the man they spoke of. There were terrible deeds doing on the Ohio frontier in those days.

Prudence and the feast and the weariness prevailed, and a majority of the copper-colored warriors shortly imitated the man in uniform. They found places, here and there, to roll up in their blankets and lie down to sleep. Wherever the Morgan place might be, it was not to be taken until the morrow.

A second council of war was held that night in another place, differently illuminated. Nearly a dozen gentlemen, some of them in brilliant uniforms, sat around a long table, under a glittering chandelier, in a large, splendidly furnished chamber. At one end of the table a tall man, not in uniform, was

standing and speaking. Every now and then he leaned forward and pointed with an ebony ruler in his right hand, at localities marked upon a large outline map of North America, which lay outspread before him.

"Your Royal Highness," he said, addressing the other end of the table, "and gentlemen: thus far our success is complete. We have beaten the Americans at every point. I will grant that they have gained a few unimportant successes on the sea, but we have been everywhere victorious on the land. They have almost no army, and they seem to have no generals. Winning Detroit, we have won the Michigan peninsula and all the regions west of it. We have defeated and destroyed General Winchester's army at the river Raisin; Harrison, with the dispirited remnant of his force, is now hemmed in at Fort Meigs, here on the river Miami, by General Proctor and Tecumseh. He must soon surrender, and we shall then hold the entire frontier, down to the Ohio River. We have absolute control of Lake Erie. The guns of our forts command Niagara River. We con-

trol Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, and we shall soon have Lake Champlain also, from Plattsburg down to old Fort Ticonderoga. We shall never again release our hold upon anything which we now acquire."

"What about the Louisiana Territory, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Valley?" asked a dark-faced, thoughtful man sitting at his right.

The Prime Minister of England, for he was the chief speaker at that council, turned with a face which was radiant with exultation.

"General," he said, "we have really nothing to do there but to land our forces at New Orleans and take possession. The United States has absolutely no title to that region, for Napoleon Bonaparte, adventurer and usurper, had no title to convey to Mr. Thomas Jefferson. We are gaining an empire several times greater than we lost by the rebellion of the colonies on the Atlantic coast. It will reach from the Ohio frontier to the Pacific. It begins, rather, in Ohio, at what the Indians call their own old boundary

line. From Florida to the Mississippi River and all the way up to the Canadas, the allied tribes are with us. They are giving Proctor the most effective support, and before many days there will be nothing left to check his further operations."

There were other speakers, and the map was frequently referred to, that all might clearly understand how greatly the British Empire had been enlarged. The only cold water that was thrown upon the exultations of the Prime Minister came from the general.

"Your Royal Highness," he remarked, turning to the Prince Regent, the nominal ruler of England during the insanity of his father, George III., "our army is not yet at New Orleans. It should be there now. As to the northern line, Lake Erie is the key of the position. I wish we were surer than we now are of retaining our control of it. The Yankees have shown us that they can build very good gunboats."

His remarks did not seem to be very well received, and the discussion went on. All the while, however, through the vast wilder-

ness far across the sea, old Joe Stowell and his wife Betty pushed slowly onward, watching, listening, for at any moment they might hear the Shawnee war-whoop and the crack of rifles.

“Oh, Joe!” she said, “I wish they were all killed. I didn’t even save the cat. He got away, up on the roof, and he wouldn’t come down.”

“I can’t help thinkin’ of Abner Jessup,” he said. “I haven’t any sure notion o’ whether he was comin’ or not.”

Around his ruined home there were still a sufficient number of red men wide awake enough to continue the discussion of their plans. No doubt similar war-parties, at other points on the frontier, were also holding consultations. But there was still another which might have been listened to with interest by the English Prime Minister and his fellow-statesmen. Almost at the beginning of it they might have heard an anxious voice, exclaiming:—

“Henry Clay, what are we to do?”

There was a moment of silence.

"President Madison, this is a dark hour for our country," was responded, and then there was deep silence again.

Three men were sitting before a wide-mouthed fireplace, the andirons of which were heaped with blazing logs. The room they were in was of moderate dimensions and plainly furnished. Candles were burning dimly upon a table behind them. Only one of them could be said to be well dressed. He was a short, slightly built man, and his appearance was very neat indeed. His face, now clouded with painful perplexity, was to a high degree intelligent, intellectual, even handsome.

"What are we to do?" he repeated, with intense energy. "That defeat of General Winchester, at the Raisin, was horrible. I have not felt so completely stricken down since the massacre of the five hundred at Fort Mimms. No, not even by Hull's surrender at Detroit. Think of it, Colonel Monroe! It is almost too much to think of. Hundreds of our best and bravest men butchered by the savages after they had sur-

rendered. I must say, it looks as if our entire western frontier were given up to the British and Indians. We have lost the lakes, too."

"Yes, your Excellency," groaned the tall, muscular man to whom he spoke. "That is the very reason why Clay and I have asked you to meet us here to-night. Our victories on the sea, splendid as they are, seem to be more than counterbalanced. I do not know that they are greatly affecting the result of the war. I am pretty blue, just now."

"I don't know that I am, Monroe," growled Henry Clay, in a deep, wrathful tone of voice. "Detroit and Chicago, Michigan and all that, all beyond Harrison's lines at the Miami of the lakes, went when Hull broke down. We can get them again, some day. I think, though, that the men are all we have lost by this hideous affair at the Raisin. We know, now, that the British expedition against New Orleans isn't ready to sail. Nobody knows when it will be. The Regent and his ministers have their hands full,

nowadays. Napoleon's grand empire appears to be going to pieces, but there's no telling what that man may do. England isn't free, yet, to concentrate all her force upon us."

"I fear she soon will be," said President Madison. "We can do almost nothing for the army and nothing at all for the lakes. Congress will not vote a dollar to enable Commodore Chauncey to strike a blow for their recovery. Defeat after defeat! No fleet! No army! No treasury! Ruin follows ruin. Why, do you not see that if General Pakenham's army ever gets to New Orleans —"

"Hold on, Mr. President!" shouted Henry Clay, springing to his feet and striding up and down the room. "If it does reach the coast, it won't get in any farther. I'm getting wild mad. My blood is up! Men like us have no right to turn cowards, just now. The West will take care of itself. We need guns, ammunition, money; but we will furnish the men and the leaders. I know two of them, your Excellency. Each of them is worth an army."

"God bless you, Harry Clay!" exclaimed the President. "Monroe and I were pretty nearly worn out. I'm glad you have a little Kentucky fire left."

"Fire!" almost screamed Clay, gesticulating furiously. "I want to burn some of our congressmen! Our enemies have butchered settlers,—men, women, and children. They have burned houses over the heads of helpless families! They have murdered soldier prisoners in cold blood! We are losing an empire, and nothing seems to arouse these wooden politicians. They sit and count dollars while the scalps are being torn from the heads of our people."

"This massacre may wake them up," said the President. "The meanest man among them might be stirred by this."

"Wake up?" responded the angry orator. "I will not let them sleep. They must and shall vote the supplies. But I can tell you one thing more. When Pakenham gets to the mouth of the Mississippi, he will find Andrew Jackson there ready to meet him. Ready to whip him out of his boots, too."

As for the Ohio and Indiana woods, let Harrison go ahead with his hands untied. Let him have no orders from any meddler in the city of Washington. He will make short work of Tecumseh's league with the British ministry, one of these days. I know the man. As for the English people, they do not like this alliance with red scalpers. They protested against anything of the kind in the Revolutionary War. Murder is not popular in England, as its rulers will soon discover."

"We ought not to underestimate one other feature of the situation," remarked Monroe, thoughtfully. "I think Commodore Chauncey is not so badly off, after all, on Lake Ontario. We shall hear from him before long, and from Macdonough on Lake Champlain."

"What is your plan concerning work on Lake Erie?" asked Clay. "Anything new?"

"Well," said Monroe, "we have a few small half-rigged, half-armed craft, penned up along the Niagara River, east of the British

batteries at Fort George. They may be captured or burnt almost any day. We have proposed building something better at Presque Isle, on Lake Erie itself — ”

“What you need there, more than anything else,” interrupted Clay, “is a man. It does seem to me that we might find one, — the right one, — among our glorious sailors. I don’t want any old fellow, though. If you want the thing done, send a boy! Send some bright young chap who knows how to build ships, and has pluck enough to sink with them, after they are in the water. Leaders are scarce!”

“Clay,” said the President, “Commodore Chauncey himself writes me that he knows the right man to send. He is a good naval constructor. He is now at the Newport navy-yard on that kind of duty. He is also in command of the gunboats there.”

“Young or old?” asked Clay. “Don’t send any distinguished fossil, to blunder on the water as Hull and Winchester did on the land.”

“Just so!” replied the President. “He

is only twenty-six. That isn't old. He has recently been promoted to the rank of master commandant —"

"Hang those long titles!" said Clay. "Say captain, and done with it."

"Not quite yet," laughed the President. "The sailors cut it down to that, now, and he can wait for his promotion. His name is Oliver Hazard Perry —"

"That'll do," snapped Clay. "Call him Perry, and send him his orders. He will have to go ahead as Jackson and Harrison are going, without either money or guns. But all the trees of all the woods are there to build ships with. The right way to find out whether or not a man is a hero, is to demand impossibilities of him. Treat him the meanest way. Let him be slandered and crippled as Jackson and Harrison have been. Then, if he raises an army, builds a fleet, and wins a victory, let him be put aside for ignorance and incompetency and put some woodenhead of high rank in his place."

"Don't get so excited, Clay," laughed the President. "I have sent to General Harri-

son more complete authority to do anything he pleases than was ever before given to any American commander except Washington. I will give as much to Jackson in the southwest. Now it is your business to stir up Congress. Get them to vote money for Chauncey and Perry. I shall send orders to the master commandant to-morrow."

"That's Captain Perry," growled Clay, savagely. "He is to work some miracles and get himself drowned in Lake Erie. Well! Harrison will furnish him plenty of first-rate wood-choppers, and will protect his boat-yard from Olliwachica's scalp-takers. I begin to feel better."

"So do I," said the President. "It's time for me to go home. Monroe, I want Harry Clay to get as wild mad on the floor of Congress as he did here to-night."

"Why," said Monroe, "that's just what he did to-day. He made a furious war speech, and offered to fight any man that wouldn't vote supplies for the army. I'm tired!"

So the three men, who were, just then, of more importance in American politics than

any other three, said good night to each other, and the council which proposed to defeat the great plan of the English ministry broke up.

The fire in the fireplace had almost burned out, but there were other fires burning that night among the cabins of the western settlers. Some rude but pleasant homes were only ashes in the morning.

CHAPTER II

The Indians are Coming

“OH, how I wish I had a rifle! This old shot-gun isn’t good for anything bigger’n a rabbit.”

It was a long, heavy-looking piece, with a flintlock, which this boy was fingering, and it was stocked to its very muzzle. It had a serviceable appearance, after all, and he added: “Well, yes, it has killed deer, but what I want is a rifle. The redskins might come. Father said they could scout all round Harrison’s army.”

It was a clear, frosty morning in the Ohio woods, about fifteen miles easterly from what is now the city of Sandusky. It was then better known as Fort Stephenson. Twice as many miles farther west, at the rapids of the Miami of the lakes, was Fort Meigs, and here General Harrison had posted all that was left of his army, after the defeat and

massacre at the Raisin River, a long day's march beyond. One would easily believe that farmers and hunters might be secure, more than forty miles behind a fortified frontier.

"Just the morning for rabbits. The crust'll bear a man, and snow fell in the night. I wish father may strike a deer, though. Nothing in the house but salt pork —"

He paused, leaning against the huge trunk of a fallen maple tree, and glanced searchingly around him. He had keen black eyes, and if he was only a little over sixteen, he was tall for his age. His sunburned, handsome face wore a resolute, wide-awake expression. His dress — buckskin hunting-shirt and leggings, coonskin cap, and Indian-made moccasins — was about the only winter wear obtainable by either boys or men in that part of the backwoods.

The tree trunk had fallen across a deep, narrow hollow at his left. As his hunter's inspection finished its circuit from tree to tree and bush to bush, it went down inquiringly into the hollow. Instantly a remarka-

ble change came over him. His eyes flashed angrily, his lips shut tightly, and he stood as erect as a young pine. Then he cocked his gun and threw it forward, ready to shoot, as he slipped quickly down and seemed to be examining something or other among the fleecy flakes which coated the hard-frozen crust.

"Redskin tracks!" he whispered. "No white man ever walked in-toe'd, like that."

The hollow went under the tree trunk at a depth of several feet, and he followed without a sign of fear or hesitation, although he might at any moment find himself face to face with one of Tecumseh's warriors.

"Only one," he said, stooping again to inspect the trail, "or the tracks would be deeper. They always step in each other's marks when they're on a war-path, so's to hide their number. These were made by only one foot — I'll get him!"

He glided swiftly forward along the hollow for some distance, and then the telltale footprints led up and out into the forest.

"That's it!" he whispered. "He was

working his way toward our house. I reckon I must be pretty near him now. Oh, father! there he is! That red scalper'll sight him, sure's you live. Don't I wish I had a rifle! I can put in buckshot, anyhow."

His face was as white as its tan would permit, and his teeth were chattering, while he took from a pocket of his hunting-shirt a dozen or so of leaden pellets, which were better than rabbit-shot for the large game he meant to send them after. In feverish haste, with trembling fingers he rammed down his buckshot, and doing so had helped him, for he became steady again, and his face recovered its fighting look.

Less than thirty yards away, a tall, gray-headed man, rifle in hand, was coming slowly forward, hunter-like, cautiously, as if on the lookout for possible game. He even sheltered himself behind trees, and he had no dog with him.

"Oh, father!" whispered the boy, hoarsely. "If he only knew! There! What's that?"

A sign so slight would have escaped any eyes less keen, or that were not watching so

intensely. It was the quivering of a sumach bush, dislodging the feathers of snow from some of its brown-red bobs. A moment passed, and there was another similar shaking, a few paces farther on. More snow fell, and the boy went swiftly, silently forward.

Was he not exposing himself to a probable shot from any enemy who might be looking among those bushes?

Undoubtedly he was, but the brave young hunter was thinking:—

“He has seen father! He is going after him! He won’t be looking this way. I can reach a tree while his back is turned.”

It was an exceedingly cool calculation for so young a fellow to make under such peculiar circumstances. A tree was reached; another,—another,—and now there was a disturbance among some hazels hardly two dozen yards beyond him.

“I saw something glitter! There! He is taking aim! Father!”

Up came the long, rusty barrel of his fowling-piece, and a loud report rang through the forest. It was instantly followed by a

terrific yell that grew fainter and was not repeated. It was the death-whoop of some savage warrior, and the boy stood silently behind his tree, loading his gun.

"I hit him before he could pull trigger," he said to himself. "Father'll know what to do, now. There wasn't another redskin near enough to hear, or that fellow'd had an answer."

He seemed, therefore, to know something about the ways and customs of Indian warfare. So, no doubt, did the gray-headed rifleman, who had so suddenly dropped flat behind the nearest underbrush. In a moment more he put his fingers to his lips and blew a shrill, quavering whistle, which the boy replied to with another precisely like it.

"I reckon Jack got him," growled the tall man, thoughtfully. "There was an awful shaking among those hazels. That's where the whoop came from. He and I'll have to work our way home right carefully, though. It's very likely there's more than one of 'em."

Jack believed that he knew better than that, however, and as soon as his gun was

once more ready, he dodged along to another cover, very near the hazels.

"There he is," he muttered. "I reckon that's the end of him. I've saved father, anyhow. I'll go in."

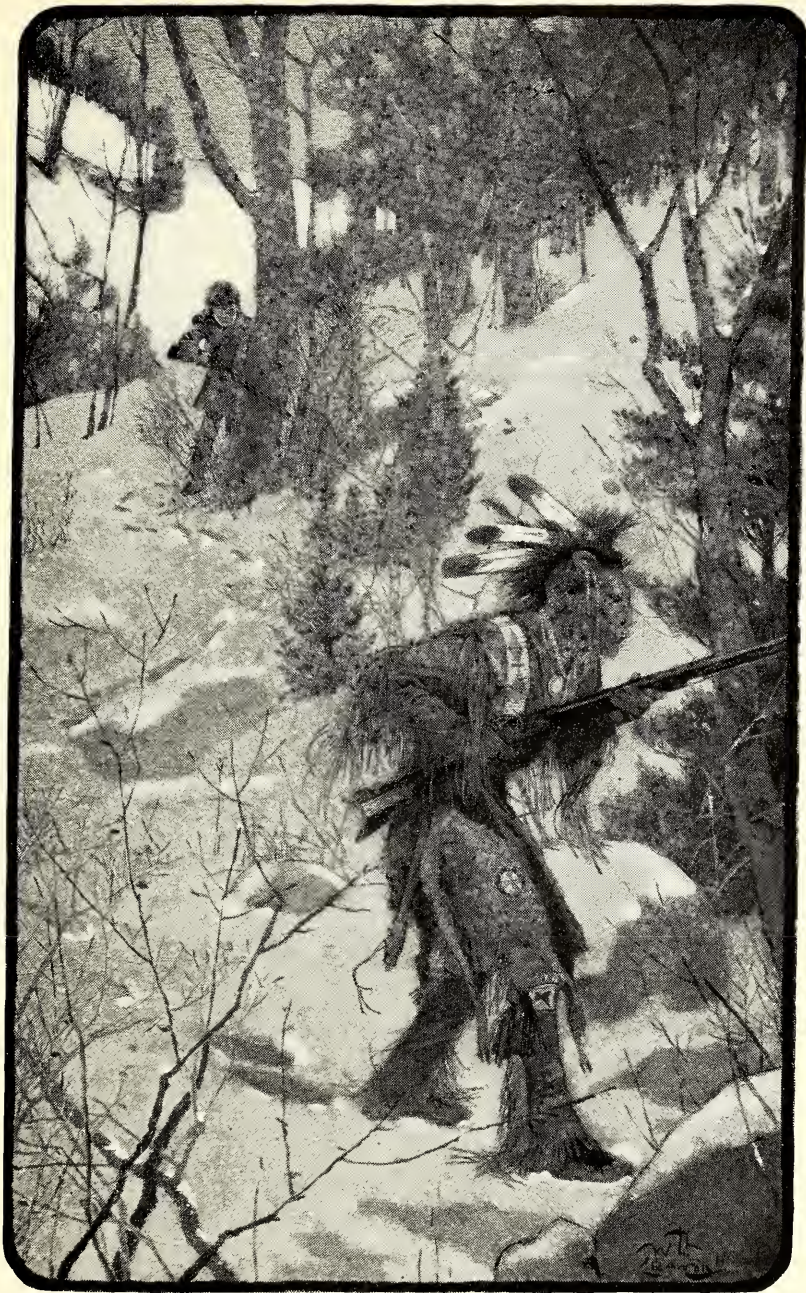
In he went, and he whistled another signal-call as he stooped over the prostrate form of the dead brave.

The medals on the broad breast, the handsomely beaded moccasins, and the character of his weapons might indicate a chief of rank.

"It's kind of awful to kill a man,—even an Indian on a war-path," said Jack, very soberly. "But what a splendid rifle! Powder-horn,—full; bullet pouch,—full; knife, tomahawk, war club. I reckon he didn't come out this way all alone."

"Jack Morgan!" exclaimed a terribly anxious voice behind him. "Are you crazy? Standing still to be shot at? Pick up that rifle, quick! I didn't come out after deer, I came to find you; come!"

"Why," said Jack, as he hurriedly obeyed, "have you found any more redskin sign?"



JACK TRAILS THE INDIAN.

"Sign?" said his father. "Here's enough; but there's worse than this. Old Joe Stowell and his wife got to the house an hour ago. Their place is burned. Jim Waller found a trail this morning, before he'd been out an hour, and he came right in. There's a war-party coming to strike the shore settlements."

While he was talking, he and his son had taken possession of the weapons of the fallen brave, and Mr. Morgan declared him a Shawnee chief.

"See that?" he said, pointing at the red man's belt. "Fresh scalp! Woman."

"Father!" exclaimed Jack. "Well! I'm kind o' glad I killed him."

"So am I," said Mr. Morgan. "Glad you won a first-rate rifle, too. I reckon I know where that piece came from."

"How can you tell?" asked Jack.

"A little too well!" was his angry response, as he again inspected the rifle. "This isn't English make. It came from Kentucky. The chances are ten to one that it was taken from one of our brave fellows that were murdered in cold blood at the river Raisin mas-

sacre. Revenge is wicked, my boy; but all my blood boils when I think of that affair."

"I reckon the Kentuckians'll take revenge for it," said Jack, with his old shot-gun in one hand, and the rifle in the other. "Let's get to the house."

"Tree to tree," replied his father. "Watch out sharp. I reckon we'll work our way in. Then every soul of us must make tracks for Sandusky. I don't know that we'll be safe, even in Fort Stephenson."

"Do you think we must give up the house?" asked Jack. "They'd burn it, first thing. Can't we defend it?"

"No, we couldn't," said his father; "too few of us. We'd only be burned up in it. Why, Jack, the brave you killed was only a scout, sent ahead! That's our advantage, now. His party may wait for him long enough to give us our best chance for getting away. All they can burn is the house and the stable. They can't hurt the wheat crop; that's safe under the snow. There'll be forty acres of it. We can put up another cabin better'n the one we have now, as soon as it's safe for us to come back."

"All right," said Jack. "I'd rather see mother safe in the fort, anyhow."

He was swinging along with an easy, buoyant step, and any man looking at him might have remarked:—

"That boy is made of whalebone and whipcord. That's the kind of young fellow they bring up in the woods. It comes from chopping, and hunting, and boat rowing, and all sorts of hard work. He can run like any Indian. He'll be stronger than any redskin of his size, one of these days."

Among the people of the Eastern states there was, then, and there may be, now, an exaggerated idea of the individual prowess of the red savages. The backwoodsmen could have told them, on the contrary, that man for man, and weight for weight, the border palefaces were stronger than their red enemies. They were surer shots and better horsemen. On a battlefield, a thousand white, frontier volunteers were more than a match for an equal number of the inferior race.

Swiftly now, and in silence, the father and

son glided homeward over the snow crust. Their manner and bearing at first had contained an odd suggestion that they considered their morning adventure little more than one of the ordinary possibilities of life in the Ohio backwoods. A change had come, however, and an almost terrified expression was deepening upon their faces. They now and then glanced furtively at each other, but did not need to ask an explanation, for this was the thought in their minds:—

“House? Home? Yes, we are going there. What shall we see when we get out of the woods? Will there be any house? Will the Indians get there before we do?”

They knew that this was entirely probable, but it was not so far to go, after all. Not many minutes later they reached the edge of the forest, and for one long moment they stood still, hardly breathing.

“Jack!” exclaimed Mr. Morgan. “Thank God! It’s there yet. I was almost afraid we’d see everything on fire. Go straight to the shore and see that the big canoe is all right and ready to be slipped across the ice.

The women must get to Sandusky by water. I won't let your mother risk a trip by land."

"Yes, sir," said Jack, "that'll be the safest way. I wish we had more canoes."

"I don't know about that," said his father. "I reckon we can get the teams through, if we set out at once. Hullo! Hark! Down, Jack! Be ready with your rifle!"

Down they dropped in one of the zig-zags of the high rail fence which bordered the cleared land, but Jack had not seen anything to alarm him. On the contrary, his face had brightened and his fears had vanished at his first glimpse of his peaceful-looking home. It was a small, well-made log cabin with log-built stables near it. By those there were a few ricks of hay and corn, and a pair of long-horned oxen were nibbling at one of the ricks. He could see, moreover, no less than three spans of horses harnessed and hitched to as many long sleighs. Beyond all was a deep cove that widened out into Lake Erie. All the water of the cove and some distance farther out was covered with glittering ice, but the main body of the lake seemed

to be open. It was almost unruffled, that still bright winter morning. A boat might easily be hauled across that frozen barrier and launched to receive freight and passengers. More than fifty acres of land between the forest and the shore were not only clear, but free of stumps, for here had been a small natural prairie, such as the red men had formerly made use of for their own cornfields. It was well for their rude agriculture that there had been many such provisions made for people whose stone hatchets would have been of small use in tree-felling. Even after they obtained steel hatchets from the pale-face traders, they were rarely known to make clearings. They were hunters, not choppers.

Jack was watching his father, now. He saw him thrust his long-barrelled rifle between two of the fence rails, and heard him mutter:—

“It’s an awful long range, but I’ve got to hit him. It might be death for all of us to let him get away.”

The rifle cracked, and Mr. Morgan sprang to his feet, shouting:—

"Done! Jack, it isn't an Indian. That's a white man. He was drawing a bead on old man Stowell and his wife, out there, this side of the stable. Maybe he didn't mean to pull trigger, at that distance, but some rifles'll carry forty rods. Come on!"

Over the fence went Jack, but his father waited to reload his gun before he followed.

"Oh! How I hate to kill anybody," he said to himself. "But every scalp in our house is in danger, just now. The white renegades that are with Tecumseh are as bad as any of his Shawnees, or worse. A white savage ought to be killed quicker'n a red one."

The entire history of border warfare in America has illustrated that fact. Something fiendish seems to be created when the cruelty of a red man is added to the evil qualities of a depraved white.

Stark and motionless behind a low knoll lay an under-sized, heavily bearded fellow with a bullet-hole in the back of his head. Beside him lay a short-barrelled, large-bored rifle. Two other men, guns in hand, were

coming in this direction from the house, and Jack shouted to them:—

“Jim! Father’s coming! He hit him. He was aiming at old Joe Stowell.”

“Prime good shot!” was shouted back. “I wouldn’t ha’ thought it. Is the critter dead?”

“Dead as a door-nail,” said Jack, as he reached the knoll. “I say, Jim Waller, I killed another out in the woods. I got his rifle, too. Just look at that, will you?”

“It’s a good one!” exclaimed the stumpy, red-haired man, who stood still for a look at Jack’s prize. “What we needed was one more rifle. The redskins are all around us. I’m afraid General Harrison’s been defeated.”

Old man Stowell stooped down and began to search the pockets of the dead man, for he wore a woollen overcoat, not a hunting-shirt.

“Not any kind o’ uniform,” he said. “He isn’t a reg’lar British sojer. Not many o’ them would do as mean a murder as he was tryin’. They do most o’ their fightin’ on the square. It wasn’t the British that did the business at the Raisin. Proctor says he

hadn't men enough of his own to stop it. He is to blame, though. I don't care what he says."

"Search him all through!" called out Mr. Morgan, as he came swinging along toward them. "I reckon we're a bit safer, now. The rest o' their war-party'll waste time waiting for these two scouts to come back and report. I said so about the brave Jack knocked over. But we haven't a minute to spare."

He was at least half right in that shrewd calculation, but not entirely so. At this very moment a furiously enraged Indian warrior was standing by his slain clansman among the hazel bushes, and he was remarking in his own tongue:—

"Ugh! Chief gone. White man shoot him from behind. Men at house know we come. Keep away from them all day. Strike at night."

If, therefore, a sudden dash and a surprise had been intended, the palefaces were now known to be on their guard. Any attack upon the Morgan cabin must now be postponed until after dark.

CHAPTER III

On Land and Water

“**N**OT one scrap o’ paper about him to tell what he is,” said Stowell, as he slowly arose from his inspection. “I ain’t even sure he’s British. He looks more like some kind o’ half-breed fur-trader from the Canaydies.”

“They’re about as bad a lot as there is,” said Jim. “Ready for anything.”

“We’ve one more good gun, anyhow,” remarked Mr. Morgan. “We can’t have too many. Hullo! And a good pair of belt pistols. Did he have any money?”

“Not a copper,” replied Stowell; “but this ’er big jack-knife can’t be beat. It’s as sharp as a razor, and so’s his long knife. I say, Josh Morgan, we’d best be out o’ this as quick as we can move.”

“That’s so,” said Morgan. “Jack’s gone to see about the canoe. We must load the sleighs, first thing.”

"Why, Josh," said Stowell, "my sleigh isn't unpacked at all, and the teams are hitched up. One o' your'n is jam full, and the women and Pat Corrigan are loadin' the other. The house is pretty nigh empty."

They were striding along toward it as they talked, and now and then they sent back inquiring glances at the rail fence and the forest. A war-whoop might sound from that direction at any moment.

As for Jack, he had raced away much more rapidly than might have been expected of a fellow with a gun in each hand. Somehow or other, too, he seemed to have grown at least an inch. Perhaps he had somewhat of the feeling of a young Shawnee upon his first war-path, or of a recently graduated West Point boy on hearing the roar of his first battle cannon.

He reached the stables and was halfway between them and the house, when he was greeted by a loud scream.

"Jack! O! Thank God! They didn't get my boy! O Jack!"

A very fat, brown-haired woman stood in

the path before him. Her arms, curiously enough, had been full of books of many sorts and sizes, including a quarto Bible, bound in red leather. All these had been dropped, however, and her plump arms went around Jack's neck.

Alas, for him! He could not hug his mother, because of his two guns. He could nevertheless tell her:—

“O mother!—I killed an Indian. They are coming! I must run ahead, now, and get the canoe ready for you to go to Sandusky in.”

“Pray, Jack! Pray!” she exclaimed, as she sank upon her knees in the snow. “O God, help us!”

She had pulled him down with her, but for some reason or other she let go of him, caught up the big Bible, and was hugging that. She was crying so that she could not pray aloud, and it was hardly a half minute before Jack remarked anxiously:—

“Mother, you're a real good woman. You pray hard, while I go for the canoe.”

“Go!” she said. “I reckon, too, that I

can pray while we pack the sleighs. Jack, I'm ever so sorry you had to kill that Indian."

"He was aiming at father," said Jack.

"Your father?" she screamed. "O! I'm so glad you hit him. If we don't fight hard, they'll murder us all."

She did not arise as promptly as he did, but in a minute or so she was picking up her scattered volumes, while her son left his weapons leaning against the house, and ran much more lightly toward the shore.

There was a low bank or bluff along the shore at the head of the cove. On this bank, at the mouth of a frozen stream, not more than twenty feet wide, a large, well-made birch-bark canoe had been hauled out, and lay there, securely propped up with logs. Care had in this way been taken to prevent harm from ice and storms. No white man's hand had shaped and finished so remarkable a specimen of naval architecture.

"We can slide her across the ice in no time," remarked Jack. "She's the biggest canoe I ever saw. Father bought her of

some redskins, over at Malden. He says it's a wonder they never came here to steal it back."

From other things that Jack said, it appeared that he had never yet seen a large vessel of any kind, although, during the previous summer, he had watched white sails at a distance upon the lake. His, therefore, had been almost altogether a forest life. He had no other memories or trainings but those of the woods and a settler's home. All the rest of the world, or whatever part of it he was yet to see, would be full of brand-new things for him.

The boat lay on a slope, and there was a little snow in it, but some pains had evidently been taken to keep it clear. In a moment more Jack had removed a log of wood from under her stern, and he was surprised then, to find how little strength he had to use to push her down the slide to the ice below.

"I reckon father must have half started her," he said. "We can bring a broom and sweep her clean. She'd carry a whole war-party of scalpers."

Mrs. Morgan had deposited her load in one of the sleighs and had hurried back to the house, while the men were busied with the horses and oxen.

"Betty Stowell!" she shouted, as she reached the back door of her cabin. "Jack is safe. He killed an Indian! He saved his father's life, too. Josh shot another Indian, and they found he was a white man. We must get away! They're coming!"

"Of course they are," calmly responded a tall, very thin and very dark-complexioned woman who stood before her. "I wish those men'd hurry and fetch the sleighs for the rest o' this plunder. I saved my bag o' yerbs and pretty much everything."

"We can take my spinning-wheel, and Josh says we can save the hand loom."

"You can use them at the fort, just as well as you could here," said Mrs. Stowell. "I reckon our place is clean burnt up by this time. It wasn't much more'n a pole shelter, anyhow. We were goin' to build a house in the spring, and mebbe we will yet, unless Harrison's army's knocked on the head.

Most likely the far-in settlers are all gone. Skelped! It's awful; but I'm glad some on 'em are gettin' killed."

She meant red men, not white, and there was a fierce glitter in her coal-black eyes as she expressed her feelings.

"Mrs. Morgan!" called out a deep, mellow voice from the one front room of the cabin. "Was it Jack kilt him? The b'ye! I'm wishin' we were all in Sondusky, the day. We'll get there, ma'am. When I kem through, last week, the road was foine, and it's not been much snowed on since then. What's the b'ye adoin' wid the boat, yonder?"

"That's it, Betty," said Mrs. Morgan. "You and Jack and I are to go in the canoe with all the things it'll carry. The men'll take the sleighs. O dear! That cat and the kittens must go in the canoe—"

"Cat!" snapped Betty. "I had to leave mine. He was on the roof. Indians are mean enough to scalp a cat, but they steal all the dogs they can get. We'll be safer in the canoe."

"That's so," came from the other room. "There was niver anybody skelped on the wather. All the British ships and boats is froze in behind the islands. The ice there is that haard you could dhrive cattle over it. Och! We've no ships of our own, an' they'll do as they plaze whin the ice breaks."

"No ships! No army!" groaned Betty. "And the redskins and British are takin' the whole country. Pat Corrigan—"

"In a minute, ma'am. I'll be comin'. But you're wrong there. All o' the Americans wasn't skelped at the Raisin, nor surrendered at Detroit. Owld Harrison's gatherin' a foine army at Fort Meigs, they say. I'll be wid him, mesilf, as soon as you're all safe at Fort Stephenson."

"O dear!" said Mrs. Morgan. "They'll be coming there, too. There isn't much of a fort, Josh says, and Major Croghan hasn't many men."

Other excited remarks were flying back and forth, when the back door swung open, and Jim Waller shouted:—

"The sleighs are all here. We must pitch

in what's left. Mr. Morgan's gone with a sled-load o' stuff to the canoe."

"Betty," roared Joe Stowell from beyond the doorway, "one more rifle. We've guns enough, now. You can take one of mine with you in the boat. The rifle Jack won is as fine a piece as I ever saw. I don't know 'bout this one."

"The cat!" said Mrs. Morgan. "I'll cover her up in my work-basket."

Then all the talking ceased, and every pair of hands and feet worked on in a kind of silent desperation. There was not much more packing to do in the sleighs after the loom and the spinning-wheel were cared for, and not many farm tools were left behind. More than one load went to the canoe on the rudely made sled that Jack called his "jumper." The inside of the house now wore a bare and deserted look. Even the hams and bacon-sides which had hung in the log smoke-house outside were all removed. Any gang of marauders, red or white, was likely to find little there worth coming after.

It was not a difficult piece of work to pull the partly loaded canoe across the ice and launch it, while the teams stood waiting in front of the house.

There was a great difference, however, in the way the women behaved under their very trying circumstances.

"Joe," said Mrs. Stowell to her husband, "I reckon you'll git through, all right, but if you git a chance to draw a bead on a redskin, don't you miss him."

"I won't, Betty," he replied, as steady as herself in every muscle of his withered face; "an' don't you git upsot. I'm glad the lake's kind o' quiet."

"Joshua Morgan!" exclaimed Jack's mother. "Oh, Josh, this is dreadful! I don't want to go without you!"

"You must, Sarah," he told her. "I'll feel better, thinking you and Jack are safe. It's a long pull to Sandusky, but I reckon we'll be there before sun-up."

She tried to say something more, but she had to give it up, and he helped her into the canoe, which the other men were steadying

at the edge of a break in the thick, strong ice. Jack was already in his place at the stern, and Betty Stowell had a paddle in her hand when she stepped in.

"Jock!" called out Pat Corrigan. "Pit oop a blanket on a pole. The wind's a bit easterly, an' it'll help ye. It'll be haard paddlin' a boat that's loaded like that. Good luck to yez all!"

Anything like a sail would have been unsafe for such a craft unless with a stern wind. She was pretty well ballasted, however, and as soon as Pat's advice was taken, she began to move over the water very well.

"Oh! The cat!" whimpered poor Mrs. Morgan, as a long-drawn wail came up from the covered basket. "The Indians won't get her."

"They won't get much of anything," said Betty Stowell, bitterly. "I wish the rascals at my house were burned in it."

Jim Waller and Pat set out for the house at once, but Mr. Morgan and old man Stowell stood still for a moment, looking after the canoe.

"Joe," said Mr. Morgan, huskily, "I hope we'll see 'em again in the morning."

"Josh," replied his friend, "I wouldn't let Betty know how close a shave I think this is of our'n. Our skelps are a little loose, jest now. Come on. We mustn't lose a minute."

"Pat," Jim Waller had said, as they walked along, "what do you think of it?"

"Think?" said Pat. "Me b'ye! that's just what I don't want to do. It's not a good thing to think of. What I want is to kill a redskin."

"Well," said Jim, "next to that, I want to kill a Britisher. If it wasn't for them, we'd clean out Tecumseh and his tribes, fast enough. I lost some good friends at the Raisin butchery."

"That was awful," replied Pat. "I'm thinkin' there'll be a sittlemint o' blood account for that, some day."

Bitter, indeed, was the feeling among the men of the West, and it had a great deal to do with their subsequent treatment of the red men. People at a distance, reading the published accounts of many things which

occurred in after years, passed severe judgments, without taking into account either the wholesale massacres, or the hundreds of minor cruelties and desolations.

The teams were reached, and there was now no more packing to be done. Just before they set out, Mr. Morgan replied to a remark from old Stowell, "We must remember, Joe, that the Indians are fighting for their old hunting-grounds."

"Humbug! Nonsense!" roared Stowell. "It's all a lie! The Maumees owned all this country till a few years ago. All the title the Shawnees had they gained by killing two-thirds o' the Maumees an' drivin' off the rest on 'em. Down South, the Red Stick Creeks drove out the Shawnees in jest that way. Now they've murdered five hundred white folks, at Fort Mimms, for bein' on what they call Creek huntin'-grounds. Shawnee's land, you know. All this country 'round here was paid for by our gov'ment to the Maumees; an' their warriors, some on 'em, are with General Harrison to-day. Tecumseh is nothin' but a lyin' red robber."

So there were two sides, after all, to the Indian real-estate question, and Joe Stowell did not attempt to name the tribe which in a yet older time had been slaughtered or expelled by the Miamis and other Indians. One numerous tribe had been the Illini, and very nearly the last of them had perished at "Starved Rock," in what is now named after them, the state of Illinois.

The teams were now in motion, plodding steadily westward, and the house was soon out of sight behind a turn of the road.

"I had hoped to make it do until I could build a better one," muttered Mr. Morgan. "Just this crop o' wheat would ha' done that. It's a hard set-back for me, but it's worse for others. They'll burn the whole frontier, now they've got in behind Harrison's line on the Maumee. I don't believe the Christian people of England like this kind of war. I reckon they don't know much about it. According to what's told 'em, they lay all the blame on the Indians and the settlers. What will come to us all if General Harrison loses Fort Meigs!"

It was not yet dark, and there had been no sign of danger along the road. Mile after mile of it was put behind them. It wound much among the trees, of course, making it longer, but it was nowhere interrupted by heavy drifts. Just as the sun was setting, they came out upon the brow of a long hill, and halted to rest the teams. At their left was a deep, wide valley.

“Josh!” exclaimed Stowell. “Look! That there’s the Jennings’s place. The red devils have reached it! My God!”

Across the valley, but not so very far away from their halting-place, a glare of red light shot up above the forest, and clouds of smoke were rising.

“Poor Jennings!” groaned Mr. Morgan. “Why! He had six children, and he was getting his place in fine condition — cattle, horses, hogs, crops, good buildings.”

“All gone!” yelled Pat Corrigan. “It’s not a fortnight since I was there. A foine woman was Mrs. Jennings. The b’yes and girls was the best I iver saw. Now, they’re murdhered an’ skelped, ivery wan! An’ the

hoose burnt over thim. It's little I care how many Shawnees get kilt. O! An' there was no hilp!"

"On! on!" exclaimed Mr. Morgan. "I'm glad Sally and Jack are in the canoe, and Betty Stowell."

The horses and oxen needed little urging down the long slope beyond, and the men who trudged beside them had no heart for talking. The gloom deepened fast, for the full moon overhead could send only a dim light down among the tree shadows.

"We must give 'em another rest," said Stowell, after a long pull. "It won't do to have 'em break down."

"Forward!" loudly responded Mr. Morgan. "What's that? Leave the teams? Come on! We may be in time."

They had reached the edge of a wide natural opening, and from the darkness on the other side of it there had arisen a long, shrill scream. It was followed by:—

"Father! There they are! They are coming! We are all lost, now!"

"Quick, Josh!" shouted Stowell. "I

reckon it's Sam Jennings. That was one o' the girls! They ain't dead, yet."

The next sounds were the reports of rifles and the horrible war-whoop of the Shawnees. The run to be made was short, however. It was hardly a minute before Morgan and his friends had joined a terrified group that was crouching behind a heavily laden sleigh drawn by four horses. Here were women and children, but only one man and two well-grown boys were there to defend them. The third boy, a mere child, knelt in the snow with his mother's arms around him.

Beyond, among the broken moonlight shadows, a number of dark forms were flitting forward from tree to tree. Triumphant yells were uttered, as they came, for they were eager to pounce upon the victims who had almost escaped them. Perhaps, more like them might have been here but for the detention of some by the pleasures of plundering and burning a prosperous forest home.

"Now!" shouted Morgan. "Let 'em have

it! Don't miss! Buckshot's good at this range. I got him!"

The over-confident savages had been met by a stunning surprise. Seven rifles instead of three, with other guns to spare, and all the marksmen covered by the teams and wagon. Warrior after warrior dropped in his tracks as he dashed forward. They could not know, indeed, by how many enemies they were checked.

"Wan more for me!" growled Pat Corrigan. "Owld Jennings is hurt. That's his big wood-chopper that's lyin' there dead."

No Indian had fired at the horses, for these were a valued part of the plunder to be won. Mrs. Jennings and her children were behind safe cover. Her husband had dropped his rifle, at this moment, because of a bullet wound in his arm. Sol Watson, of whom Pat had spoken, had been driving, and had been shot through the head at the first fire. In a few moments more all would have been over, but for the arrival of the Morgan party. Their shooting had been so much

more effective, because the Shawnees had uncovered themselves in their blind rush, but only one rash warrior actually succeeded in getting to close quarters. Tomahawk in hand, he sprang upon Pat Corrigan before the brave Irishman could recharge his rifle. Pat must have been a fencer or a boxer, from the skill with which he parried the stroke of that hatchet; but the desperate grapple that followed was a very short one. Old man Stowell had kept the belt pistols captured that morning, and the muzzle of one of these passed under the arm of the wrestling red man. There was a click, a report, and Pat was free to load his piece, while the retreating yells among the shadows beyond told that the astonished war-party had given it up, for the time, at least.

“Josh, I do jest thank ye,” said Mr. Jennings, huskily. “We were almost gone. But as soon as Nelly has tied up my arm, we must push on. We didn’t set out quite soon enough. I’m afraid some on ’em may have followed after us by the lower road. You see, I reckon this wasn’t their main party. Too few on ’em.”

"Your place is burnt."

"All of it!" groaned Jennings. "But ain't I sorry about poor Sol Watson, lyin' there! He was a cousin o' mine. Best kind o' feller. Don't cry, Nelly. We may get to the fort now."

Very hasty, tangled, and broken were the further explanations given on both sides. One of the Jennings girls said:—

"O mother! How I wish Lake Erie ran in front of our house! We might have gotten away in a canoe, then, just as Mrs. Morgan did."

"No, we couldn't, I'm afraid," replied her mother; "not unless we had a ship. All the ships on Lake Erie belong to the British. They claim the lake, too."

"Nelly," interrupted her husband, "my arm's all right. I can move it. The bone isn't broken. I can have it better 'tended to by the surgeon at the fort."

"If we get there," muttered Morgan, gloomily. "We're not much more'n half-way, now. Anyhow, we've gathered more guns and some powder and lead from those

dead Shawnees. I hate to kill human beings, but I can't help wishing it was forty or a hundred, instead of only four. I reckon some o' the rest were wounded, though, and that'll count 'em out from any chase after us."

CHAPTER IV

The Cruise of the Bark Canoe

THERE were no forest shadows on the bosom of Lake Erie when Jack Morgan's canoe slipped out of the cove. Its blanket mainsail was at the prow, spread upon two sticks instead of one, and it was closely watched by Mrs. Betty Stowell, crouching behind it, paddle in hand.

There were hardly any clouds in the steel-blue winter sky, and the slowly sinking sun made brilliant glitterings on the snowy shore and its outreaching border of ice. This was, in some places, several miles in width, filling up all coves, while the sharper headlands had often clear water to their very feet. It was said that there had been severe winters, when the entire lake was frozen, with a solid surface from shore to shore, so that loaded teams might cross from the dominion

held by the British on the north to that which they coveted at the south.

"Jack," said Mrs. Stowell, "this 'ere old blanket's a good thing; we needn't tire ourselves out a-paddlin'. We haven't so far to go on the water as they have on the land, if 'twasn't for the Bay o' Sandusky, when we git there. The road through the woods is as crooked as twenty rams' horns."

A sort of suppressed sob came from the middle of the boat.

"Don't cry, mother," said Jack.

"O dear!" she said. "I wish I knew just how it is with Joshua. He and the others may be fighting Indians now, for all we know. If it hadn't been for this war, we were doing first-rate."

"Oh, now, mother," said Jack, "don't try to paddle. Mrs. Stowell isn't paddling. Cover up and keep warm. I'll steer. There won't be any British cruisers to hinder us. They're all locked in by the ice."

"They'll all be out again in the spring," she said mournfully, "to see what mischief they can do. Our folks are trying to build

some ships at Presque Isle and New Amsterdam, but they can't put together anything the British can't knock to pieces."

The places she spoke of are now better known as Erie and Buffalo, and her remark only expressed the prevailing opinion as to British superiority upon the water.

"I don't know about that," said Jack, combatively. "I never saw a big ship close to it, but I saw some cannon once, when father and I were at Detroit. A ball from one of 'em'd make a hole in a log house. I reckon it'd go through the side of a ship, if it hit it plumb."

"The British build such big ones," she replied, "we haven't anything to match 'em. They'll come sailing across the lake in the spring; you see if they don't."

"I'm afraid our folks won't be ready for 'em as soon as that," remarked Betty Stowell; "but they will, one o' these days."

A great, bright idea, not unlike Betty's, was at that hour stirring the busy brain of a young-looking, handsome fellow, in the blue uniform of a United States naval officer.

He was standing upon a piece of timber near the head of the harbor of Presque Isle, or Erie, not many miles east of the Ohio border. The place had in the old days been a French settlement with a small, rude fort. There were now a dozen or so of houses, a tavern, and a couple of insignificant trading establishments; but it was all nothing more than a grimy hamlet, with a very miscellaneous population, while the country inland was mostly wilderness.

Altogether, the most interesting feature was the recently constructed shipyard at this point on the shore, with a long row of barracks which had been provided for ship carpenters, seamen, and, it might yet be, for soldiers.

These works were near the mouth of what was known as Cascade Creek, and there was another shipyard, not so extensive, farther back, at the mouth of Lee's Run. There is a city ward over all that locality at the present day, and the old yard is occupied by the buildings between Beech and Sassafras streets.

The young officer was gazing earnestly, in the moonlight, at the as yet mastless hulls of two large vessels which stood upon their ways. They had an appearance of being pretty well advanced toward a future readiness for launching. Beyond them lay the keel and bare ribs of a third craft, much smaller.

"Dobbins," he remarked, "you and Noah Brown have done good work on the *Niagara* and the *Lawrence*."

"Glad to hear you say so, Captain Perry," responded a brawny, sailorlike man who stood near him. "It's the best that could be done with green timber. There is some of it in those hulls that was put in the day the trees came down. They'll float just as well, but they won't last long."

"I've heard say," replied Master Commandant Perry, "that if a cannon-ball strikes green wood, it'll go through and not throw out half so many splinters as it would if the timber were seasoned. In a sea-fight, the flying pieces are sometimes as bad as grape-shot."

"I've been hit by one," said Sailing-master Dobbins. "But I'll tell you what, sir, the *Scorpion*, yonder, and the two gunboats up at Lee's Run, must be pushed along, now. What we'll want soon is guns, ammunition, rigging, and most of all, it's the right kind of men. The British may be here any day, sir. Why they haven't sent a force to burn this yard beats me."

"I hope they won't wake up too soon," said Perry, a little anxiously. "I heard of a plan they had, while I was on my way. I came in a sleigh over the ice, but I had to go ashore nights. Everybody I met had some rumor to tell. The British fleet is ice-bound, but they might try an expedition in canoes. We'll not be safe a day after the ice breaks. We will arm and drill all our workmen."

"That's pretty well done already, sir," said the sailing-master. "Captain Foster's company of volunteer riflemen's a good one, too. He has more than sixty men. If we had a few cannon, sir!"

"I'm going to Pittsburg as soon as I can,

about that," responded Perry. "I shall have some of the lighter guns sent on at once. It'll be a tremendous job though, by and by, to haul twenty-four pounders and thirty-two pounders through the woods, all the way from Pittsburg."

"It's well for us," said Dobbins, "that there are iron foundries there at all. There are men living yet who saw Braddock defeated at Fort Duquesne. They were small boys then, but it shows how the country is growing. I don't wonder the British want to win it back again."

"They won't do it this time," laughed the young master commandant, a sort of light flashing across his face. "We are going to take Lake Erie before long, and we shall keep what we take. I wish I knew how Harrison's army is getting along. He was badly crippled by that affair at the Raisin."

"That was awful!" said Dobbins; "and if enough of redskins got ashore here, not a man of us'd be left alive."

"I thank God for the ice, then!" exclaimed his commander, soberly. "I'm glad it's in

their way here, even if it helps the British batteries at Fort Erie to pen in all the vessels we have in the Niagara River. I'm going after them as soon as I get back from Pittsburg."

"The ice'll be out pretty soon now, sir," remarked Dobbins. "If we had only a few more men, we could make the old fort strong enough against anything but heavy guns. It'll be a tough bit of a job I think, sir, to get these two deep-draught brigs of ours over the bar out yonder."

"The bar?" said Perry. "Oh! I'll take care of that. I'm glad it's there. "It'll keep any of the larger British craft from getting in too near those hulls and the fort."

Very cheerfully then, he turned and walked away, for the advanced condition of his ship-building had encouraged him, in spite of the obstacles which manifestly remained in his way. He had undertaken a task which some men declared to be an impossibility, and here was really one bright spot in the very wintry gloom by which he was surrounded.

"British and Indian canoes on the lake!"

he said aloud. "I wonder how many boats of all sorts they could muster for an expedition to burn our yards and shipping."

There was no one to answer him, but one very important canoe, neither British nor Indian, was slowly slipping along under a blanket sail on two sticks, near the westerly end of the lake. It carried much freight for a bark canoe, and it held three passengers. Two of these, in the middle and at the prow, were sitting all muffled up in wraps and furs against the increasing cold of the March winter night. The third passenger sat bolt upright at the stern, a paddle in his hands and a rifle at his side.

"Mother," he said, "I wish you'd go to sleep, if you can. I'll keep a good lookout."

"I'm afraid you'll freeze to death," she replied; but she and Betty Stowell tucked in their coverings, as he told them to do.

"No," he said, "I shan't freeze. We're pretty safe now. We'll get there."

"Sleep?" she half whispered to herself, the next minute. "I'm thinking of Josh!"

The wind, which had been so light at the

first, was increasing now, and Jack had pretty steady duty as steersman. There were stars visible as well as the moon, and he could keep his course very well. The canoe rode the waves buoyantly, but every now and then it gave him a reason for thinking:—

“This is well enough; but I don’t know how it would be if the water got rougher. There’s a long distance to sail, yet.”

He may have been overestimating that part of his position, for miles at sea get away silently, and without giving any notice as they go. The nearly straight line he was able to follow was ever so much shorter, as has been said, than any ram’s-horn road through the forest, and the canoe had been gliding along at a rate of nearly four miles an hour, since leaving the cove at the house.

The Morgan house! His home!

At this hour there was no such building on the Ohio shore. In place of it was a huge bonfire, that sent its ruddy glare away out over the lake, and across the snow-clad wheat-field to the woods. Around the fire were stalking to and fro a score of angry, disap-

pointed red men, some of whom every now and then expressed, in varied whoops and yells, their delight in this work of destruction, and their wrath at having been in some manner cheated out of their expected scalps and their revenge for their slain comrades. The ashes of the Morgan place were hardly a sufficient compensation for their losses and for all the trouble they had taken to get to it. The fact is, that even a strong tribe of savages contains only a limited number of full-grown warriors and has none to spare. It was an important military fact that constant skirmishing with the frontiersmen, quite as much as the more notable battles, lost or won, had seriously diminished the fighting strength of the Shawnees and other tribes composing Tecumseh's league.

"Jack," said Mrs. Stowell, putting her head out from under her cloak, "I can see a speck of somethin' away out yonder, on the water. It's jest as well for us that we're not so very far out from Sandusky Bay."

"I can see it," replied Jack, "but there

isn't much of it. I reckon I'd better keep a little in toward the shore."

"No, you needn't!" she exclaimed. "You jest steer straight on, so you won't lose any distance a-gettin' 'round the p'int this side o' the bay. Mebbe our'n isn't the only canoe that's out on the lake to-night."

The constant watchfulness of forest life in those days was said to develop keen eyes. Betty Stowell's had served her very well. Not more than a mile away, northerly, four large canoes were rising and falling upon the water. They were all propelled by paddles, and they were even more heavily laden than was the Morgan boat, for they were full of men.

Indians? Warriors?

Not all of them, for a loud voice in the foremost canoe was shouting back to somebody behind him:—

"That's one of our scout-boats, most likely, sir. If we lose time going after it, we'll not reach Morgan's till morning."

"All right, Garry," came sharply back. "That's the best time to get there. Follow that boat! Find out what it is!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" was obediently responded, but Garry muttered to himself: "Orders is orders. A starn chase is a long chase, though, and there's too much ice to suit me."

There were a few other red uniforms in the party, beside these two; but all the paddlers and a number more were Indians, from the swarms of all sorts which had gathered to be fed and trinketed by the army authorities at Detroit and Malden. The red men of the Canadas and the Michigan peninsula were quite willing to receive presents from their Great Father beyond the Atlantic, and their United States Great Father had not yet come near enough.

On, therefore, as directed, swept the canoe commanded by Garry, while the three others continued, slowly but steadily, in their previous course.

"I can see 'em better, now," said Jack. "That's a boat. It can't be anything else. We're in danger, as well as father and the rest. It'll take 'em a long pull to catch up with us, anyhow."

Mrs. Morgan was sitting up, now, and the

excitement was doing her good, for she pulled a double-barrelled gun from under some blankets and began to examine its primings, — for all guns were flint-lock in those days.

“We’ll all be ready to shoot,” she said. “Betty, you and I’d better do some paddling. Every inch is worth something, if they try to follow us.”

“They can paddle better’n we can,” replied Betty, but she put out her paddle promptly, and the canoe did get along at a better rate.

Garry’s boat was overloaded, but it was making five miles an hour to the Morgan boat’s four. That it would overtake the latter, was therefore a question of time and distance. So far as any human calculation could determine, the fate of the two women and their young steersman seemed to be sealed. What that fate would be at the hands of Garry’s redmen was beyond a question.

Minutes were like hours to the three fugitives, all of them now paddling desperately, for in the clear moonlight they could see not only that they were followed, but that

their enemies were evidently gaining on them. The waves, too, were running higher, and the canoe was more difficult to manage.

"This is dreadful!" groaned poor Mrs. Morgan. "I do hope none of 'em are as near to Josh as these are to us."

"The p'int, Jack! The p'int!" screamed Betty Stowell. "That's it, right ahead. We haven't so far to go beyond that to fetch the inner bay. Pull! Some of our folks may be out there. We may get helped!"

"Those chaps'll be within rifle-shot in ten minutes," said Jack. "I'll send a bullet among 'em as soon as they come a little nigher."

His newly won weapon lay beside him, and he found himself asking anxiously how far it would carry.

"Father said he thought that some o' the best guns from Kentucky are good at forty rods. I couldn't get a good sight, though, across these waves. No more can they, and that's a good deal. O dear! I don't see what can save us, now!"

Neither of the women could see any hope,

and they whispered to each other fiercely, "We'll die fighting!"

Nearer, nearer, came the foe, and now Jack could make out the point of land which Betty Stowell seemed to know so well. The waves were breaking upon it, to show it more clearly, and he steered as if he meant to run against its nose.

"Look out for rocks!" exclaimed Mrs. Stowell. "Sakes alive! What's that?"

"One of 'em fired a shot," replied Jack, "but they can't reach us, yet."

"That isn't what I mean," she said. "Look yonder! Out from the p'int."

It was not so very far out, either. It was something that lay, white and glittering, upon the surface of the water. Over many acres of this, the billows were not so boisterous, and seemed to be dotted with pallid faces.

"Ice!" said Mrs. Morgan. "Look out for it, Jack. The edge o' one o' those cakes'd cut right through this bark."

"It's drifting this way, too," he replied. "O mother! This is what'll kill us!"

It would not do to hesitate, however, and he steered bravely toward the point.

"If I could reach it before the ice does," was in his mind, but some of the floating cakes were very near.

"They're shootin' again," said Betty, and a long-drawn cry arose from the basket which contained the cat.

At that same moment a storm of shouts and yells burst forth in the pursuing canoe.

"Hurrah!" yelled Betty. "That there critter has run agin the ice. I jest do hope it'll sink her."

That was precisely what it was doing, for the canoe had been under strong headway when it harpooned itself upon the sharp point of a half submerged and flinty ice fragment. A wide gap was torn near the prow, and the chilling water of Lake Erie came rudely in.

"Why!" said Mrs. Morgan, "if that's so, they'll all be drowned."

"No, they won't," replied Mrs. Stowell, regretfully. "It isn't so good as that. They can all swim ashore, but they've lost their

canoe, and all their powder'll be wet, even if they save their guns. Our skelps are a heap tighter on our heads, jest now."

Whatever was to become of Garry and his crew was now of small importance, for here was the point, and the drifting ice appeared to be left behind. There was too much wind, and the blanket sail was lowered for safety, while the three paddlers toiled on as if there might yet be an enemy near them. There were several miles to go, and it seemed an age before they had crossed the inner bay. Jack was steering, quite cheerfully, toward a huge bonfire that was blazing on the shore, and wondering for what purpose it had been kindled there, when a hoarse, deep voice came to him:—

"Who comes there?"

"Jack Morgan and his mother and Betty Stowell!" he called back; and then another voice shouted:—

"Hurrah! Glory to God! Sarah! Sarah! We're all here. We just got in. We saved the Jennings folks, too, all but Sol Watson. The redskins are all along shore. Come right in!"

"Josh! I'm coming!" was all she could say, but Betty Stowell sang out:—

"Isn't my husband there?"

"No, ma'am," responded one of the many men upon the beach. "He said he'd go out to the p'int and see if you were comin'. There was a big squad went with him."

"Send another, then!" she screamed. "There's a boat-load o' redskins a-swimmin' ashore. Don't you fail o' gettin' every one on 'em."

The canoe touched the beach, Josh Morgan had his wife in his arms, and Betty and Jack gave a rapid explanation of their narrow escape. More than a mere squad of riflemen set out at once to join Joe Stowell and his party, and an officer in a ragged uniform remarked:—

"I'm right-down glad you brought in that canoe. The red devils slipped in here two nights ago, and they stole every boat that was in the water. You see, it was the blackest kind o' night, and we'd let the fire go out, so the sentry couldn't see 'em."

A few hours later, Sergeant Garry and two

British soldiers were brought in, half frozen, from beyond the "p'int."

"We shot two o' the redskins," the men reported, "but the rest of 'em got away into the woods."

CHAPTER V

The Canada Pony

THE site of Fort Stephenson at Sandusky had been selected by necessity and a very competent army engineer.

It was needful that it should be on somewhat elevated ground, with no higher elevations within cannon range. Its own cannon, if it was ever to have any, must also command the shore and Sandusky River landings, and as much of the bay as their range would permit. Its position, therefore, was good, but it had been constructed out of such materials as were at hand. These were the trunks of the forest trees, larger and smaller. From the mightiest oaks had been cut the logs for the two blockhouses at the corners of the oblong, irregularly shaped central enclosure. Shot from the light field-pieces then in use, four-pounders and six-pounders, might do little harm to such wooden walls as

those, except at very short ranges. The lines of stockade which connected the blockhouses were also of pretty heavy timber, deeply set in the ground, pointed at top, and pierced with rifle holes at every third stick. A large area was, in this manner, surrounded by stockade, and in this, at the present time, were considerable numbers of horses, cattle, swine, and great ricks of hay and grain. Another line of military fence on the east went down from the fort to the landing.

The place was therefore fairly well provisioned, but its artillery consisted of one six-pounder gun, and for even this there was only a moderate supply of ammunition. Major Croghan, the brave young officer in command of the fort, had less than three full companies of soldiers to defend it with. These might be somewhat strengthened from time to time, by the coming in of refugees from the forest settlements. There was no town as yet. There were a couple of trading concerns, a tavern, and a few log dwellings, but that was all. Within a few miles were a number of farms and small clearings, for just

before the war the lake-shore region had been considered almost secure.

What might be called a small reënforcement of the garrison had now arrived from the desolated homes of the Morgan, Stowell, and Jennings families. Hardly had the sun arisen before two, at least, of its members, were going around the fort, inspecting every corner of it with intense curiosity.

"Jack," said Mrs. Stowell, "there are holes enough to shoot through, if the redskins get here."

She had pushed out at one of them the gun she had brought with her, and she was taking aim, apparently, at the surrounding country.

"I reckon they'll keep their distance," he answered, as he imitated her at another shot hole. "What they may try on is to take us by surprise."

"I reckon they won't, then," she said. "Croghan's men ain't fools. Humph! Surprise! And all on us used to their ways! I'll sleep with one eye open."

"That's what we'll all do," said Jack; "but

I wish I knew how our house is looking this morning."

"I don't believe it's there," she snapped, pulling in her gun; and she was right.

All the eyes in three large canoe-loads of redcoats and Indians had discovered the disappearance of the Morgan dwelling two hours before. Moreover, they had gazed upon the smoking ruins with strong expressions of disappointment, for this was the work which they had laid out for their own doing. There seemed even to be a derisive, mocking sound in the chorus of whoops which came to them from the shore.

Of course they pulled in and landed to exchange friendly greetings and inquiries, but all their long, cold paddling across the lake had been thrown away. Perhaps it was some small satisfaction to them to learn that the war-party which had in this manner gotten in ahead of them had won small plunder and no scalps by its easy victory. A listener to their talk, however, would have noted that none of them seemed to have

any doubt of the speedy destruction of General Harrison's army and the capture of Fort Stephenson. Red warriors, white soldiers in red coats, they were shortly all busied at camp-fire cookery, and in that they were like other people.

"Jack!" exclaimed Mrs. Stowell. "That toot from the barracks means breakfast. I want mine!"

"'Twasn't a tin horn," said Jack. "It was a reg'lar-built bugle. I'm going to learn how to blow one."

"'Twon't kill Indians," she muttered. "I'd ruther see some big cannon. I heerd the major tell your father he'd nothin' but a pop-gun. Rifles'll have to do the business, this time."

"Well," said Jack, "I reckon mine's a good one, but I shan't have any chance to use it. They won't try a fort like this."

"Ugh!" she responded, Indian fashion. "They're attackin' General Harrison's army, at Fort Meigs, and that's four times as strong as this is."

"The men told me," he said, "that not a

word had come from there in more'n a week."

"They may be all murdered, then," she replied, "for anything we know."

The barracks within the stockade consisted of a dozen or more of very long log houses. More like them were building, but these were ample for the present garrison. Betty Stowell went to join her husband in a house to which his friends had led him; but Jack discovered, to his surprise, that his father and mother were to be the honored guests of the post commander.

"Everybody kind o' looks up to father," he thought; "but I didn't know they called him a soldier."

They did not, indeed, but it appeared that Joshua Morgan was one of the men to whose judgment other men defer without asking why. Even at the breakfast table, Major Croghan was asking his advice.

"Morgan," he said, "I don't know but there's one beam o' daylight. One of our Maumee runners brings word that the President has sent a Captain Perry to build war-

ships at Presque Isle. He's to have 'em ready to fight the British next summer. All we know of Harrison is, though, that he's at Fort Meigs. We're not sure he has men enough to fight Proctor and Tecumseh. Here are the red rascals all around us, anyhow. What do you say?"

"One thing's clear enough," replied Mr. Morgan. "Harrison must have this news about Perry, and any letters the captain has sent on ought to reach the general right away. Send three or four well-mounted men, by different roads. One of 'em might get through, if all of 'em didn't."

"Father," exclaimed Jack, from the end of the table, "may I go, for one?"

"O Josh!" began Mrs. Morgan. "Why, he's a mere boy!"

Something in her husband's face checked her, and he said slowly:—

"Well! A boy on a swift, light pony might be able to get across ice where a heavy weight would break in. Yes, Jack, you may go."

Major Croghan looked at him almost in

astonishment, but he turned, then, for a closer inspection of his volunteer messenger.

"You will do," he said thoughtfully. "I shall send Jim Waller, too. He's one of the best scouts I know of. I'll pick out two more, as soon as I can. I think I know just the horse for Jack. I'll go right about it, now. Come along, youngster."

Breakfast had been nearly over for the major, and in a minute or so more Mr. Morgan and his wife were alone.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "I feel as if it were sending him to death."

"Sarah," he answered her, sadly enough, "I'm afraid it's his only chance. I believe Harrison's all right, but if Proctor and his army are coming to this miserable, half-armed, half-garrisoned fort, Jack will be safer among the volunteers at Fort Meigs. Don't tell him so."

"Husband!" she gasped. "This is awful! Why, I thought we were safe here."

"Only about as safe as they were at Fort Mimms, when the Red Stick Creeks came," he said, with a groan. "There were five

hundred of them inside the stockade, and only a few dozens escaped. Croghan says he will never surrender, though. We shall all die fighting."

"Let Jack go!" she exclaimed. "I won't keep him here an hour. Let him have all the chance there is. I do hope his horse'll be a good runner."

"The major said he'd take care of that," he replied. "So will I —"

"I want to see that horse, myself," said Mrs. Morgan. "I'll come right along with you. O dear! May the Lord help us! This is dreadful!"

There had been much talk about Captain Perry and his squadron that was yet to be constructed, but the main interest of all the persons in and about the fort was absorbed by the unexpected nearness of their red enemies. There were several friendly Indians whose presence was allowed as if they were white men. Some of them, the Miamis, or Maumees, in particular, were almost trusted, for they were the hereditary foes of the Shawnees, who had stolen their hunting-grounds

and killed them by the hundred. Many Miami warriors were all the while with General Harrison himself, serving him well as scouts and runners. On the present occasion, however, Major Croghan felt like taking the advice of such a man as Joshua Morgan, and only white couriers were to bear to the commander-in-chief of the Army of the West the tidings from Presque Isle and of the new movement of Tecumseh's war-parties. Major Croghan had written to General Harrison, among other things:—

“Not only are the woods full of them, but parties from Malden are beginning to cross the lake. The outlook is very bad.”

There were many horses within the stockade, and Jim Waller had been inspecting them. Here he came now, leading a pair by their halters.

“Ponies!” exclaimed Mr. Morgan. “I say, Jim, wouldn't a big horse be better for you? You'll need a traveller.”

“Well,” said Jim, “this feller can carry me part o' the time. If we git into a tight place, I can carry him.”

"Not exactly," said Morgan; "but what made you pick out that couple?"

"Jest what I want," said Jim. "They understand snowdrifts. These 'ere Canaydy ponies know what ice is. I don't want any hoss on this trip that's likely to git stuck. They're good runners, too."

"All right," said Morgan. "Which of these is for Jack?"

"Is he to go?" sharply inquired Jim. "I reckon I know what that means. Major, I don't believe it's as bad as that."

"Shut up, Waller," commanded Croghan. "Not a word more. Get your cooked rations ready as quick as you can. Men, there, saddle and bridle these ponies. I'm glad they're a kind that can go days without eating."

That was the reputation of the swift and hardy breed of animals which had been developed among the French farmers of Lower Canada, in the earlier days of colonial history. Curious stories were told of their speed and endurance. Jack's own eyes danced with excitement as he patted and

fondled the somewhat rawboned and not at all beautiful nag, which had been selected for him. "Polly," her name was said to be, and she responded to his caresses as if he had been an old acquaintance.

"I won't wait for any saddle," he shouted. "I want to see what she's made of."

The bridle had been put on, and in an instant he was on her back, careering around the snowy area within the stockade.

"Faith, an' he's a good rider," called out Pat Corrigan, as he saw him go. "That's the right baste for the like of him."

"Well!" said Jim Waller. "I reckon she can throw almost anything there is, if she tries to, but Jack'll stick. He's used to ridin' bareback."

It looked like it, and the little black mare was screaming with delight at her free scamper under somebody that seemed to meet with her approval.

"She's set on springs, I reckon," thought Jack. "She's just the critter to run away from Indians with. Hurrah for General Harrison!"

He returned in a few minutes, to find his seniors busy with his outfit. Polly was to carry a saddle, of course, but it was not well to burden her too heavily otherwise.

"You mustn't try a shot at game," said the major. "The crack of a rifle might bring the wrong men after you. It isn't more'n forty miles, by the way you're to go, and your rations must last you to Fort Meigs."

"I'll get there," said Jack, "if the ice in the runs and swamps is hard enough to bear Polly. I want some feed for her, though."

"Not much," put in Jim Waller. "I know that breed. They'll pick the bushes in the woods like so many deer, if you give 'em a long tether, so they can get around. Mind jest this one thing, though. If you have to make a fire, don't you sleep nigh it. Get well away from the blaze, and bunk in a warm hole in a snowdrift. The redskins can smell a fire five miles away, and they'd have your skelp before daylight."

"Now, Jack," said his father, "your worst danger is in your first hour's ride, and again

when you begin to get near the Maumee. You'll have to watch out, then."

"I don't mean to let them catch me," replied Jack. "But isn't that a big blanket! I can roll up in it three times over."

"It's all the bedclothes you can carry along," said Jim, "but I found a bearskin overcoat for you. You won't have to freeze."

Jack and his father went back to the barracks, and Mrs. Morgan was told about Polly.

"I'm glad she can run," she said; but after that she did not seem to feel like talking, not even about Harrison's army. Betty Stowell came and sat down by her, putting a strong, neighborly arm around her waist.

"It's only a few hours' ride," she said.

"I can't even cry, Betty! I wish you wouldn't say anything—"

"Now, Sally, Jack's goin' isn't anything to cry about," said her iron-nerved friend. "You're kind o' broke down. It's been a tryin' time for all of us; but it's been worse for some others. There hasn't a word been heard of some families that were too far out."

Alas for them, indeed! Probably all that

would ever be known of them would be the finding of heaps of ashes and a few wolf-gnawed bones.

By his father's orders, Jack lay down for a few hours of rest; but he already knew what was to come then. He was to get away from Sandusky in the night, and to put behind him as much of the distance as he could before next morning.

That was one reason why his mother did not see him depart. Worn out with fatigue and excitement, she was sleeping so soundly that a light footstep near her did not disturb her slumber; neither did a carefully gentle kiss; and Jack did not utter aloud the loving farewell that came swelling up into his throat. Moreover, if he was crying, silently, when Polly went out at the fort gateway with him on her back, it was not at all on his own account — it was for his mother.

"Likely as not," he thought, "I'll never see her again. She's safe, anyhow; and I must get to General Harrison with these despatches. I reckon I'll have to play fox."

He did not know, even then, that Jim Wal-

ler was already miles away from the fort, nor that two other experienced scouts had followed, by different routes. Who could prophesy which of them, if any, would succeed in crossing the dangerous forest which separated the main force of the American army from the rude fort at Sandusky?

The last person to speak to Jack had been his own father.

"I know General Harrison very well," he had said. "You may tell him from me, that I do not know what there is in the letter the Maumee runner brought from Captain Perry. I do know, however, that he and the captain ought to have a conference as soon as possible. Tell him, too, that these canoe parties of the enemy seem to me to threaten a blow at the Presque Isle shipyards. He should manage to have a land force sent for Perry's protection."

"I'll tell him," gulped Jack, trying to look brave, and away bounded Polly.

"O my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Morgan, looking after him. "I'm afraid it's a last good-by! God save us all!"

At that very moment, late as it was, a sleigh, drawn by fast horses, was urging its way over badly broken roads, east of the Ohio line. In it was Master Commandant Perry, caring neither for day or night, or aught else in the world, so he might speedily reach the Pittsburg foundries. The first points of his plan for a victory on Lake Erie required the rapid completion and transportation of his cannon. He was in no danger now, but he was preparing for a struggle of life and death, for the freedom of the inland seas.

CHAPTER VI

Girdled by Tomahawks

IN the course of that winter, army teams had been driven all the way from Fort Stephenson to Fort Meigs. Something like a road had been made, therefore, but it would not now have been a good one for a pleasure drive in a cutter. Perhaps the most important thing for Jack, at the outset, was that there was moonlight enough to enable him to follow so clearly marked a trail.

"If the redskins are watching anywhere," he thought, "it'll be right along the road. I won't let Polly get blown. She must be ready for a long run."

He prudently attempted to hold her in, on that account, only to find that she had a will of her own, or, it might be, pony ideas, concerning the best and safest way of getting to Fort Meigs. His first pull on the bridle

seemed to be taken as a signal for her to quicken her gait, and the second pull sent her off at a swift gallop.

"I can't stop her!" he exclaimed. "What on earth am I to do? She might take me right into the middle of a Shawnee war-party! This is the worst luck!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Here they are!" he gasped. "She's done it! Just as I was afraid she would!"

So she had, the wilful, hot-tempered, reckless beast that she was. Just here along the road, as a matter of course, a pretty strong party of Indians had encamped. It was their special purpose to intercept or entrap such couriers as Jack Morgan, carrying messages from fort to fort. Some of them had been awake, on patrol duty, and their quick ears had caught the sound of Polly's hoofs. They stepped out promptly enough, and if Major Croghan's messenger, that is, the horse under him, had been going at a walk, or even a canter, he would surely have been riddled with bullets.

"Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!" in a chorus of angry

grunts, followed quickly upon that too hasty and badly aimed volley, however.

Not a shot had hit anything but snow or a forest tree, and Polly was now running like the wind. A dozen red runners set out to follow her, but no man, red or white, can do his best gait over slippery snow and with a gun in his hand. She was going four miles to their one. Before long, also, it occurred to every warrior of them that it might be well for him to stop and load his empty rifle. Any horse could gain quite a long lead while a man was putting a charge into one of those old-time muzzle-loaders.

"Ugh! Ugh!" they said to themselves, and to each other. Then they gave it up, for Polly had altogether defeated them.

She may have been aware of it, for, at the end of her second mile, she came quietly down to a walk, and Jack had something like a breathing spell.

"It's just about as father said," he remarked. "He knows all that's worth knowing. He said they'd be watching, next, not far this side o' the Maumee, but they couldn't

picket the woods all the way from that to Lake Erie. If it wasn't for the drifts, though, I'd leave the road altogether."

It was not too cold for riding, with a bear-skin wrap to help the forest in protecting him from the wind. Still, as the hours went by, Jack grew weary, hungry, and sleepy. He knew, too, that Polly must have a rest, and he began to look out for a camping-place. The moon had long since gone down, and the stars were shining brightly. He had, however, no timepiece to tell him how near or how far the dawn might be. Here and there, as he went on, the drifts across the road were yet high enough to give Polly some trouble, but she proved her Canadian winter training by not seeming to mind them a great deal.

"That looks like an old road, there, at the left," he said at last. "I might find some kind of shelter. As likely as not, there's a clearing and a cabin."

Polly was very quiet now, and obeyed the rein better than at first. She went into the side-track willingly enough, but then,

at the edge of such a clearing as Jack was thinking of, she stood still and uttered a shrill neigh.

Jack did not say anything, but his heart was beating hard, and he was trembling from head to foot.

The clearing was a wide one, and there had been a house in it, and barns. Some settler and his family had lived there. There may have been quite a number of them, old and young.

"I can see three," groaned Jack. "Some of 'em may have been snowed under; some may have been burned in the house or killed in the woods. The redskins have been here. That's what they'd ha' done for us, if we hadn't cleared out as quick as we did. Hullo! There's a light, now, over beyond that farther side o' the open. It might be an Indian camp-fire. I'd better not go any nearer. Come, Polly, we can't stay here. I hope General Harrison'll clean 'em all out! I'm in a shiver!"

He went back to the main road, and onward, mile after mile. It was after sunrise

when Polly was once more turned into the woods. This time it was not along any path, but only to find thick underbrush and, if possible, some water. This, of course, was not hard to find, and it was a small stream running so rapidly that in some places it was not frozen. The young despatch bearer declared that he was very nearly so, and both he and Polly were thirsty, as well as tired.

"I won't kindle any fire," he said. "I'll eat my cold rations and give Polly a good feed. Then I want to see if she can really do any picking for herself among these bushes."

He ate and drank. He gave her a few handfuls of oats in a nose-bag. Then he fastened his long rope tether to the halter, and tied its other end to a sapling.

"Now, Polly," he said to her, "play deer. I'd like to find out just how they get a living in snow-time."

She may not have understood him, but she at once proceeded to comply with his request. He lay at the foot of a great oak,

wrapped in his bearskin and blanket, calling himself as warm as toast, while he curiously watched his self-willed Canadian racer.

She had glanced searchingly around after her nose-bag was removed, and she now did step toward the nearest bushes. A few twigs were nibbled, too, as she moved slowly along from bush to bush, but these were not all that she was after.

"She's hunting for something," thought Jack.

She had broken some thin snow-crust, near the roots of a young tree, using one of her fore hoofs as a hand.

"Hullo!" exclaimed he. "If she hasn't turned up some pretty good grass! She's a deer."

She had, indeed, uncovered several luxuriant tufts of natural hay, as good as any other blue-grass in all Ohio.

"That critter," said Jack, "could make a living anywhere. I 'spose I'm to be a farmer, if we can clear out the redskins. I don't feel quite so sure about farming, just now. I might find something else. I won-

der whether it'll ever pay a fellow to run ships on the lake. Maybe it would, one o' these days, if it wasn't for the British."

Polly worked contentedly, for the hay was in fine condition. Jack had eaten his breakfast, and in a few minutes more he was not watching his self-supporting pony. He was sound asleep, and the precious despatches of Master Commandant Perry and Major Croghan seemed to be at the mercy of any prowling savage who might happen to discover the weary courier. The woods were wide, however, and the major may have been reasoning correctly when he said to Mrs. Morgan at the headquarters' breakfast table:

"I think you need have no fear, madame. He is far on his way by this time. Almost all of our messengers have come and gone safely heretofore."

"It isn't so now!" she said. "The Indians are here, and we know it. There is danger! He is only a boy."

"I'll trust Jack," said Mr. Morgan, but an orderly in uniform stood in the doorway, touching his hat to the major, and the latter

at once arose and went outside to hear the soldier's report.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The patrol is in, sir."

"Did they see any redskins? Did they find any sign?"

"Well, sir, it's worse'n that," said the soldier. "They didn't see an Indian, of course, and three o' the runners you sent out last night may ha' got through; but they found Harry Sutter, shot dead and skelped, within a mile o' the fort."

"That's close work," muttered the major. "It doesn't look to me as if they were in any force yet. I'm sorry for Sutter, but somehow I feel encouraged. This doesn't mean Proctor and Tecumseh right away, and no more boats have been heard of on the lake."

Mr. Morgan came out and joined him, and afterward, when they again talked with Jack's mother, they told her the opinion of the patrol concerning three of the messengers, and said nothing to her about Harry Sutter.

Long, deep, and restful was the morning

nap of her hardy young backwoodsman, and it was at last broken by Polly herself. She did not exactly bite him, but her teeth closed tightly upon his arm, and a sharp shake bade him get up, give her some oats, and set out for Fort Meigs.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, as he opened his eyes; "if I didn't dream you were an Indian!" If she had been, perhaps he would not have awakened at all, but now he was on his feet, ready for another hearty meal and a long ride.

That was what Polly also was ready for, whether or not she felt any special interest in military and naval despatches.

"The oats'll hold out till we get there," remarked Jack, "if she can turn up another lot of wild hay. She did get something from the bushes. Now I know how the deer live in winter."

Not a great while after that he had ridden out into an open place, where he could get a good look at the sun.

"Why, it's afternoon!" he exclaimed. "How long I must have slept! Polly's

rested, anyhow. Hullo! What's that? I'm ready! Something's coming!"

He did not at once push Polly to a run, however, and she stood stock-still while he turned in the saddle. His rifle was cocked and lifted, and his breath came quickly for a few seconds, but the one horseman who came galloping along the road was not an Indian.

"Jack!" he shouted, as he drew nearer, "push along! The red devils are after me. Go it! I touched one on 'em, though."

"Jim Waller!" shouted back Jack, "I thought you were ahead of me."

"No, I ain't," said Jim. "I worked 'round through the woods for a dozen miles and more before I dared strike into the road. Anyhow, two guns are better'n one. Have you shot anything?"

"No," said Jack, as they now cantered along, side by side, "but they shot at me. How many chased you? They can't catch us —"

"Yes, they can," replied Jim. "Four on 'em were mounted, but there's only three, now. There they come!"

Not more than a hundred yards behind them were the three wild horsemen, galloping rapidly, and whooping as they came.

"Halt!" commanded Jim, his bronzed face blazing red. "Wheel! Let 'em have it soon's you can get a good bead on one of 'em."

It was Jack's rifle that cracked first, but he did not see any Indian when he glanced along its barrel, and he killed no man when he fired.

"Jim," he said, "he is white!"

"The others are red," said Jim. "The feller I hit was a redskin. Hullo! You didn't miss! You struck his hoss. He's down! There! One more. A hoss is a bigger mark than a human. Rolled him over!"

"The other Indian won't come after us right away," said Jack. "Hadn't we better load up?"

"No," said Jim. "We're in range yet. Ride on. I've good pistols, but we must gain a long distance before we're safe to halt and load."

They went on at a gallop for several minutes before the experienced scout would pull in. Then, while they were ramming down their charges, Jack remarked:—

“Why, Jim, they won’t follow us on foot. They know they can’t catch up.”

“You don’t know how many more are behind ’em,” said Jim, “and you don’t know what’s ahead. It’s our business to get to Harrison, if we can. We may manage to save Fort Stephenson from a massacre.”

Jack’s face whitened suddenly. He was priming his rifle, and his hand shook so that he spilled the powder. He had not thought of such a thing until this very moment. Could the fort be in real danger?

“Father and mother are there,” he muttered. “I wish I were with them. No! We must reach Fort Meigs!”

There, he knew, was a large army of American soldiers, commanded by a good general, and help would at once be sent to Sandusky.

He had but a dim idea concerning Fort Meigs, the army, or its commander. If he

had been at the Miami rapids that afternoon, instead of being on Polly's back, in the woods, he might have imagined that he saw a larger copy of Fort Stephenson, with ever so much more stockade, and without any lake. He would have seen, too, that the great gate of the outer barrier had been swung open wide, to allow the entrance of a strong body of mounted riflemen. There were nearly three hundred of them, and at their head rode a man of not much more than middle height, in the uniform, somewhat weather-beaten, of a major general. He cast swift glances in all directions as he rode in, as if anxious concerning the condition of the fort, and he hailed an officer who came to meet him, with:—

“Andrews, what volunteers have come in, since I left for Kentucky?”

“Not more'n a hundred, General,” was reluctantly responded. “More of the men are on the sick list, too. Are we to have any real help from Kentucky—or anywhere?”

“Plenty of it!” exclaimed General Harrison. “We're all right, if General Clay can

get here in time. I learned, though, that Proctor and Tecumseh have mustered a stronger force than they ever had before."

"Well, General," said the officer, with a darkly shadowed face, "that means every scalp in this fort, unless the Kentucky men get here before they do. We couldn't hold out —"

"Yes, we can," loudly responded the general. "We can hold this place all the spring and all summer. Cheer up! Send the quartermaster to look out for Kenton and his riflemen. They're a pretty good reënforcement, anyhow. I was half afraid we'd not get here."

On he rode, to his headquarters in the inner quadrangle of the fort, and as he went he bowed his head.

"Andrews is only too nearly correct," he said, in a low voice, thoughtfully. "It would be a worse affair than that on the Raisin. Worse than Fort Mimms. Why don't those men at Washington do something, instead of leaving me to my own resources? Are we to lose the whole West, and the lakes

with it? We shall, if this army is to be butchered, here on the Miami. We shall, unless they provide for a fleet of gunboats on Lake Erie. I haven't had a solitary despatch from Washington since I crossed the Ohio River."

A good reason for that may have been that he had pushed his way through the woods, with his slender escort, in a hot fever of anxiety lest he should find Fort Meigs already under the British flag. He knew nothing at all concerning Major Croghan's messengers. An hour or so later, however, while he was busied with a close inspection of the garrison and the defences, another of the four fell dead in the middle of a party of redmen which had surrounded him. He had killed a brace of them, and he died fighting bravely; but not upon him did they find the important letter from Master Commandant Perry, or anything more than copies of the despatches of Major Croghan. All the news, therefore, was still going on to the Miami, carried by two Canadian ponies, a man, and a boy. Behind these, a couple of

miles, several red and white horsemen were following.

“Now, Jack,” said Jim Waller, “ride! Our chance is all in horse-hoofs. I know ’em though. They’re the fastest runners I ever saw come from Canadydy.”

CHAPTER VII

The Hatchet Cut

“**N**OW!” rang loudly out from one corner of a huge, grimy, gloomy, but lofty-roofed room. “Let go! Hurrah!”

“Hurrah!” came back from scores of strong voices, and in a moment more the shadows vanished, and all the vaulted space was full of a hot red glare.

“There, Captain Perry,” said the voice, in the corner, “it’s running finely. One more of your thirty-two pounders.”

“We shall need them all,” responded Perry, in a low, intense tone, as if the molten iron running from the furnaces of that great Pittsburgh foundry were having a peculiar effect upon him. “I must hurry back to the lakes. Send on every piece as soon as it’s ready.”

“We’ll do that, sir,” replied the master workman, heartily. “There isn’t a man in any of these shops that doesn’t feel as if he

were a soldier. Moulding guns is getting ready for a fight."

"No guns, no victory," came thoughtfully back. "It is getting late, though. It was not till March 13 that Congress voted the money. Chauncey will have his guns, too. All my other supplies will have to come by way of New York and Lake Ontario."

"I hope you'll have them," said the master workman. "You can rely on us. This casting is a success."

If regarded simply as fireworks, it was magnificent, and the men cheered again in their excitement as they gazed at the coruscating streams of liquid metal pouring into the mould.

The aspect of American affairs was dark enough, but there were gleams of light here and there, and this was one of them. Congress had yielded to the fiery denunciations of Henry Clay and had made the needed appropriations. Commodore Chauncey had performed several small but brilliant exploits on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, but the land forces on that frontier were still

inadequate, and he needed more ships, more guns, and more good sailors.

The commodore himself had been sharply criticised, but all that was said against him was nothing compared with the ignorant blame heaped by the critics upon General Harrison. He did not care much for it, for he was beyond the reach of either help or harm, that bitter cold day in March. He was shut up in Fort Meigs, with only a thousand men fit for duty, and all he could do was to walk from point to point of his defences, to see if anything great or small could be done to strengthen them.

"Guns, provisions, Major?" he said to an officer with him. "Yes, we have them, and the hospitals are crowded with sick men. All that are on their feet are hardly enough to man these lines. They must be held, though."

"That's what we must do," said the major.

"If Proctor should come," continued the general, "and if he should have the courage to storm us, all this place would be a mere shambles. I don't believe he will storm it.

If all his troops were British soldiers, he would; but Indians do not like to face cannon, or charge palisades, and they can't surprise us."

"I'd like to see cannon at work on them, anyhow," growled the major.

The general persisted in being hopeful, therefore; and he did not permit his garrison to see any cloud upon his face. The fate, not only of his entire force, but of all the frontier settlements, depended upon the firmness and ability of one heroic commander, and he did not waver for a moment. Everybody felt better, safer, now he had returned, but he had many reports to hear that day, from white scouts and friendly Indians, concerning the extent and nature of the British and Indian preparations for breaking through the line at the Miami.

Olliwachica, the Shawnee prophet, the brother of Tecumseh, was announcing wonderful dreams, and prophesying certain victories. He was going around from tribe to tribe and camp to camp, as usual, uttering fiercely eloquent declamations against the

palefaces. His very name was to be translated, "The fire that is moved from place to place," and he was never at rest. He was even more effective than his warrior brother in arousing the tribes to prevent any further encroachment by the farm makers, who were cutting down the forests and driving away the game. This was, he told them, correctly, a last struggle for "the old boundary line, and for their very existence."

That was as far as he could see into the position, for if the woods and prairies were merely to become British instead of American, all the forts and trading-posts would be as strongly held, and the hated clearings would multiply as rapidly.

The redmen were doomed to pass away, in any event, but they were now holding great councils and dancing great dances, as if some combined and desperate effort of their own could stay the advancing tide of civilization. It really began to look as if they would now be able to destroy any American force that could be gathered to meet them.

"I would give a good deal to hear from Croghan," the general had said, more than once. "He is in even more danger than we are, if they should try a dash at him."

So the commander of Fort Stephenson, himself, understood the matter; but he was not giving his darker views to other people. He could hardly help going, however, to the landward gate of the stockade, and gazing wistfully out at the forest. One man was with him for a somewhat similar reason.

"Do you believe they got through, Major?"

"I haven't much doubt of it," he said. "I told Mrs. Morgan so. Things look a little better for us, too."

"Why so?" asked Mr. Morgan.

"Just this way," replied the young commander. "No more of 'em have been seen. That means that they are all gathering to fight Harrison. There isn't any doubt of their coming to the lake shore, sooner or later, but I mean to be ready for 'em. This fort'll fight. There won't be any surrender."

"So say I!" exclaimed Mr. Morgan. "We'd better all die fighting."

He turned away and walked on to the barrack house, where his wife might be expecting him. It had a high, wide chimney, rudely constructed of clay and sticks, but well devised to carry off the smoke from the hot blaze in the fireplace below. When Mr. Morgan opened the door and walked in, the room before him had but two occupants, and they were sitting on the floor before the fire.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "What's this? Sarah! Are you and Betty running bullets?"

"Yes, I am!" she said. "I must do something for this fort. The men say their guns are of all sorts and sizes. Some of 'em haven't half bullets enough, if the Indians are coming."

"Why, Josh Morgan!" added Betty, as she knocked out a slug from her moulds, "we've stirred up the other women, too. They're all a-goin' at it, and so are the boys. This fort won't be took for lack o' lead."

"Just the thing!" he said, half laughing. "But what we need most is more men to send the bullets."

A large gray cat had been sitting by Mrs.

Morgan, as if inspecting the work, and now sprang into her lap as she turned around. Her face had been reddened by the fire-heat, but there was now another kind of light on it.

"Joshua," she said, "I'm not worrying about Jack, so much as I was. I kind o' seem to feel right about him. It's down in my heart, somehow. It feels easier."

"Well!" he said. "I know you're a praying woman. I s'pose it's what they call faith, and I wish I had more of it; but there hasn't been time for him to get to the Maumee. I'll jest hope he isn't killed."

Could a mother's watchfulness and heart-ache have calculated that snowy distance better than he did?

Perhaps not, and she could hardly have made the proper allowance for a long run by two swift Canadian ponies. Nevertheless, it was at about this hour that Captain Andrews, inspecting and changing the guard at the main gateway of the outer stockade of Fort Meigs, was startled by a loud shouting among some of the men who were off duty and were grouped at a little distance beyond.

Shout followed shout, and Captain Andrews called out to them:—

“Boys! What is it? Bring ’em in!”

“Two fellows from Sandusky!” came loudly back. “Both on ’em’s wounded. They’re hit bad, but they saved their skelps.”

“Despatches for the general!” added another voice. “They’re from Croghan!”

In a few moments more a pair of very weary ponies halted at the gate, and the rider of one of them said to the captain:—

“Yes, sir, despatches. I don’t know how bad Jack Morgan’s hurt—nor me either. Reckon a surgeon can tell. Hold on, if you can, Jack!”

“Take him right out o’ the saddle!” commanded Captain Andrews. “Bring a stretcher. Call the surgeon. Where is it, my boy?”

“On my head, sir, and on one leg,” faintly responded Jack, as a pair of strong arms took him from his pony’s back. “I want Polly cared for, too. She’s as good a horse—”

There his voice failed entirely, and he lay

in a dead faint, upheld by a brace of soldiers, while the captain himself stepped forward and began a hasty inspection.

"My hurt's in the side, sir," said Jim Waler. "'Twon't amount to much, I reckon, after it's done up. We was 'bushed by redskins, not five miles out from this, but we were goin' at a gallop when they fired. It's a wonder they didn't hit the hosses. But it was a flyin' hatchet that gave Jack that cut on the head. His coonskin was cut clean through."

"So it was," said the captain; but a short, twinkle-eyed man, who was also looking at the hurt, interrupted him with:—

"Thank God, my son! It was the cap saved his skull, and it's only a scalp wound. Let me have a look at his leg."

A knife-slit in the buckskin legging uncovered an ugly bullet gash on Jack's thigh, and the surgeon cold-heartedly declared:—

"There's nothing serious the matter with him but loss of blood. He'll be all right in short order. Tough fellow."

"Well, yes, Doctor," said Jim. "He's been

all but rid to death, too. Pegged out. So am I. Jest you look at my ribs."

Some of the men had been half-stripping him, rapidly, and this time the surgeon spoke and acted as if he were almost excited.

"Did you ride five miles with that bullet-hole in you?" he asked. "If you did, you're made of iron. It'll put you in hospital for a month; maybe longer."

"No, it won't," said Jim. "I ain't any tougher'n Jack is, neither, and we won't be put anywhere till we've seen the ginerel. But we mustn't talk too much out here, no-how."

"Brave boy!" exclaimed a deep, kindly voice near him, and Jim turned for another look at Jack.

"The skull isn't cracked, General," said the surgeon. "He's coming to."

Just then Jack's eyes opened and his lips parted.

"Are you General Harrison?" he asked.

"Yes, my plucky young fellow, I'm the general. Very sorry you're hurt."

"Don't let mother know," said Jack, his

voice still husky and low. "She'd feel dreadfully. The papers under my shirt-front are for you. One is a letter from Captain Perry. He's in command of the new ships on Lake Erie —"

"Glory!" interrupted the general. "Glory to God! Give me the despatches. Hurrah! We are to have something done, at last. The British are to be fought on the water as well as on the land."

"Yes, sir," whispered Jack. "The other letter's from Major Croghan. My father told me to tell you —"

"Are you a son of my old friend Joshua Morgan?" asked the general, with sudden interest.

"Yes, sir," said Jack.

"Don't tell me now, then," said Harrison, "but I want to know all he had to say. He has a clear head."

"There's a good deal of it," said Jack; meaning the message, and not his father's head; but he was quite willing to be silent while Captain Andrews took out and delivered the despatches.

"I wish I could communicate with Perry," muttered the general. "The Indians are in the way, just now. How these two got through them is a miracle! Jim Waller, I'll go to my quarters and read the papers. Then I'll come to the hospital for a talk with you and Jack. Are the woods full of redskins?"

"No, General," responded Jim, "they're only half full, now, but I kind o' reckon there's more on 'em comin'."

"You're right there," he said. "But Perry! Ships! A new movement! It's like a patch o' blue sky in a stormy day."

The wounded messengers were carried to the hospital, and again the surgeons who examined them expressed their wonder that they had been able to keep their saddles.

"I don't know 'bout that, Doc," groaned Jim, as one of them was probing the path of the bullet in his side. "I wasn't thinkin' so much o' keepin' the saddle as I was o' holdin' onto my skelp. It begun to feel loose, I tell ye!"

Jack said nothing, for his head was aching

badly, and so was his left leg, but the thought in his mind was:—

“It all came and went like a flash. There wasn’t any skirmish. We didn’t either of us fire a shot. All I know was that I heard some whooping, all of a sudden, and some shooting, and something hit me on the head. Polly jumped twenty feet, I guess, and Jim hollered. But I didn’t know my leg was hurt till we’d ridden ever so far. I’m glad I’m going to get well; but the best of it is that the general got the despatches. Mother doesn’t know I’m wounded, anyhow.”

Up at the post headquarters, all alone in an inner room, with the door shut and a candle burning on the table, sat General Harrison poring over his despatches.

“So far, so good,” he said aloud. “But Congress can’t do anything for this army, just now. They’re too late. Here we are, penned in, and here we must stay and fight it out. The fate of all the western country depends upon our holding this miserable fort against a superior force. We must do it!”

He was a born hero, a man of great ability

in many ways, but he was not a prophet. He could not see into the future. At that moment he was planning bravely and feeling deeply, concerning the helpless settlers in scattered cabins and hamlets, but the real meaning of his thoughts and words, as we may read them to-day, looking over the past, might thus have been written out:—

“Unless we hold Fort Meigs, the great cities of Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, and a hundred smaller cities; millions on millions of people; mines of gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, coal, and the granary of the world, will hereafter belong to Great Britain, and not to the United States.”

It was a tremendous result, to seem to turn upon so small a pivot, and he put away his despatches to go out for another look at his defences. Some of his officers joined him, and he talked to them encouragingly about the force of riflemen which was so soon to come from Kentucky, as well as about the new fleet that was yet to be launched upon Lake Erie.

“General Jackson,” he told them, “sent

word to me from Tennessee that the Red Stick Creeks are quiet just now, and will send very few warriors to Tecumseh. What troubles him most are the reports of the fleet and army that England is sending to take New Orleans."

"He is just the man to meet them," replied one of the officers. "What does he say about it?"

"Why," said the general, "it prevents him from sparing us any men from Tennessee or the lower river. He will need them all to fight for the mouth of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. He says that if the British beat him, we may as well give up the entire Louisiana Purchase, and I think he is right. There is good stuff in General Jackson."

The two heroes of the West had their personal differences, no doubt, but they understood each other. At that hour, each of them was a sort of autocratic ruler over all the affairs intrusted to him.

Having very little else to send them, the President had conferred upon them all the

authority he could give, and they were using it as no other men then living in the West could have used it, for they had the unstinted confidence of the people who were rising to sustain them.

Somewhat later, the general reached the hospital, and he paused by couch after couch to inquire concerning sick or wounded men, and to cheer them up. He reached the rude pallet on which Jim Waller was lying, and a surgeon was just going away from it.

"Don't make him talk, General," he said. "He's a little out of his head. I can't just say how he'll turn out."

"Shet up, Doc," gasped Jim. "I ain't dead yet, Ginerall. Croghan'll hold Fort Stephenson, you bet! What he needs is more men. The British across the lake can't do anything worth while till the ice breaks. I reckon Sandusky is safe, though, so long as the enemy is tryin' to gather in onto Fort Meigs."

"That'll do, Jim," said the general. "Lie still and get well. We may want you and your rifle again, pretty soon."

"I'll be there, General —"

But Jim could say no more. His head fell back upon his corn-husk pillow, while his commander passed on to one of the other couches.

"Jack, my boy," he said, in a low, kindly voice, as he bent over him, "how are you feeling, now?"

"Very well, sir," said Jack, "but I can't move my leg. I wish you'd see that they take good care of Polly. She's one o' the best runners you ever saw."

"I'll see to that," laughed the general. "Some day we shall want to put you on her back again."

"That's it," said Jack. "I'll carry some despatches back to Major Croghan."

There was a lantern in the hand of the general, and its light fell upon his face as he responded:—

"The boys of the West! I declare! I believe the best part of our armies is under twenty. Jackson says he'll take 'em from thirteen years old and upward. Any fellow that can carry a rifle and pull a trigger."

Jack was looking earnestly at his genial, intellectual, courageous features, and if he could have expressed himself, he would have said:—

“What a man he is! I’ve seen a hero! I don’t wonder they all love General Harrison. I’d like to fight under him.”

Precisely that feeling was at work all through the garrison. The men were talking about him and his perilous trip to Kentucky. They felt better for it, and the good news concerning Perry and his fleet was also beginning to get out among them. Night had come, however, and a stillness reigned that was broken only by the occasional neigh of a horse or the challenge of a sentry. It was a strange kind of peace and silence, with so terrible a danger hovering around among the moonlit woods.

Thirty miles away, on the shore of Lake Erie, there was another quiet place, very much like it. A wind was roughening the water, and there was a haze in the northern sky that might promise a coming storm.

In that direction, toward the other side

of the lake, were several islands, larger and smaller, and these were now joined together by unbroken fields of ice. Beyond these, northward, were ice-bound bays and inlets, and a long, narrow strait which connected Lake Erie with Lake Huron.

In among these winter harbors, here and there, were a number of ships of war. At one place a new one was building. None of them were large, but all were well armed and manned. It was well understood by the Americans that all these vessels were waiting only for the great spring thaw which was soon to come and set them free. Then they were to sail out and coöperate with General Proctor and Tecumseh in a great campaign which they had planned. There was nothing on the lake to oppose them, and before summer there would be a line of British forts from Sandusky to the Ohio River, for the Americans would have no important force on that frontier after the capture of Fort Meigs and the destruction of General Harrison's mere wreck of an army.

CHAPTER VIII

The Doomed Fort

MASTER COMMANDANT PERRY, or Captain, as everybody called him, was not yet returned from Pittsburg. Feverishly busy work was going on, however, in the shipyards at Presque Isle, or Erie. Not only were the ships building with energy, but all the able-bodied men in or about the settlement were under some kind of preparation for military duty. The defences improved from day to day, while the rumors of possible attacks by the enemy were strengthened by the occasional appearance of canoes within telescope range on the lake.

There came a day when a great storm of wind and rain grew warmer before it ended, and all the lake-shore dwellers knew that the customary spring thaw had arrived. Just before it came to ruin the roads, a few of Perry's smaller cannon reached Presque

Isle on sleds drawn by oxen. Each piece was hurried into position on the fortifications, but they all might as well have been logs of woods, for there was neither powder nor balls for them.

The Quakerish display of guns may not have been quite useless, for it was reported to the British commanders without any further information relating to ammunition.

On the day after the great storm, the ice began to move. The lake would soon be clear, and the British squadron would be free to cruise wherever it would, while weeks and months must pass before the Americans would be prepared to oppose it.

"O Joshua!" said Mrs. Morgan to her husband, as they stood on the shore at Sandusky, watching the great cakes of ice drift out of the bay before a breeze, "how I do long to hear some word from Jack! We don't even know that he is alive!"

"My dear," he said evasively, "the scouts report that there seem to be no Indians in the woods around here. I don't believe anything happened to Jack. He's all right."

“If they are not here, they may all be there,” she said. “They may be taking Fort Meigs, for all we know.”

He was silent, for the thought which he did not speak to her was:—

“What I wonder at is, that we are all alive ourselves. Our trouble may come to us any day—or night.”

Something had happened to Jack—he was not all right—and he also had several things to wonder at.

“Who would have thought,” he said, looking at his leg, “that a bullet-hole could be cured so soon? I can get around on crutches first-rate, and they’ll take the bandage off my head in a few days. Polly’s all right, too.”

So she was; and she seemed to know him when he came to see her; but poor Jim Waller was still in the hospital, angry all the while because he could not be out in the woods.

There was already an increasing need for men like him. Tecumseh’s warriors were closing in upon their intended victims, day after day. Under his skilful leadership, they

made a cordon around the fort at a short distance, through which nothing less than a strong body of troops could have broken. No more supplies could get in; no messengers could come or go; and only two or three times did the general obtain any tidings from his friends in Kentucky.

"They are coming," he cheerfully assured his garrison, but there were some who could not help answering to each other:—

"What will they find when they get here?"

They knew that Tecumseh had come already, and that Proctor's troops were marching nearer. How long could they hold the fort? Even the sick men began to crawl out and ask if there was anything that they could do.

Weeks had passed, and closer yet drew in the fatal circle of tomahawks and scalping-knives. Then the bayonets also arrived, and the almost continual skirmishing grew sharper.

There came a morning, late in April, when Jack stood at the door of the hospital, talking with Jim Waller, and the crutch Jim

was leaning on was his own long-barrelled rifle.

"You'll be able to use it in a few days," said Jack. "You're getting along first-rate."

"Hark!" exclaimed Jim; "hear that? Cannon! Jack, the attack on the fort has begun! Proctor has got his artillery through the woods. Run! Come back and tell me as soon as you can."

"Cannon?" anxiously responded Jack, as he hurried away. "Knock the stockade all to flinders! Let 'em all in!"

The hour of trial had indeed come. The Miami River, from the lake nearly up to the fort, was full of boats and canoes bringing the main strength of General Proctor's army. The British artillery had arrived in the night, and was already in position; but it consisted, after all, of only guns of moderate calibre. It might do the mischief Jack spoke of, but not right away. He had just reached the stockade, and was peering out through a shot-hole, when a second thundering sounded very near him.

"Hurrah!" he shouted; "the general was

ready for 'em. They won't have it all their own way. But they've four or five times as many men as we have."

The British engineers were hurriedly constructing breastworks of logs and earth to protect their artillery, and these would be nearly as strong as the walls of the fort.

"There they come!" said Jack. "First big lot o' redcoats I ever saw. Band o' music, too. We haven't any band. How the redskins are whooping and dancing, — swarms and swarms of 'em!"

"General Harrison," said an officer on horseback, riding up to him, "look yonder! This is to be a regular siege. They mean to starve us out."

"No," replied the general, soberly. "Proctor won't make such a blunder as that. He'll try to breach our stockade. Then we must look out for a storming party in the night. They will certainly come. We must prepare for the worst, gentlemen!"

Jack Morgan heard him, and his heart sank within him.

"I know what that means," he thought.

“If they break in, the redskins’ll scalp us all. Proctor couldn’t stop ’em if he tried to.”

All day long, that 28th of April, the cannonade went on, at intervals, on both sides. No great harm was as yet done, but anybody could understand what the final result was sure to be.

Jack made his promised report to Jim Waller, after watching for a while the far-away red lines of the splendid British infantry, and the flashes and the smoke of the guns. There had been excitement in that, almost enough to raise his spirits, but they went down again before he reached the hospital, and Jim was also down, flat on his back.

“Jack,” he groaned, “this ’ere’s kind o’ killin’ me. I want to get out to where I can shoot somethin’.”

“You couldn’t,” said Jack. “There isn’t anything within rifle distance.”

Jim listened eagerly, nevertheless, to all there was to tell him, and then a tired feeling came upon Jack. He went and lay down, for he had seen something like a battle, and it had used him up entirely.

“They can’t break in to-night,” he thought, before he fell asleep; “but even the general says they will, some day. O dear! we had such a good farm, and it’s gone. The house is gone; all that wheat is lost. I’ll never need any farm, if I’m killed here. Then they’ll go to Fort Stephenson and take that. Mother’s there. Father’s there. How could any man hurt such a woman as mother is? They’ll kill ’em all!”

It was only the terror which was in the mind and heart of many a frontier boy and girl, just then, and upon hundreds of them the bloody reality came.

Master Commandant Perry, at Presque Isle Harbor, was that day preparing to go to New Amsterdam, at the mouth of Buffalo Creek,—there is a city there now, named after the creek,—for supplies of all sorts. He was also wondering whether or not some British expedition would land troops and burn his shipyards in his absence. Why they did not do so is a question almost without an answer. In fact, the many severe critics of American management in the War of 1812

might profitably turn their spy-glasses across the lines. Well as the British soldiers fought, wherever they were brought into action, the errors of their commanders were fully as great as were any that are recorded of our own. The English list may fairly include the vandalism which burned the city of Washington, and the lack of statesmanship, at least, which provided for the ruin of General Pakenham's fine army, at New Orleans, after the war was over, after a treaty of peace had been made.

Sleep is as good a thing for a boy in a fort as anywhere else, and at daylight, next morning, Jack was again at a stockade, rifle in hand. Peeping through a shot-hole, he was watching the distant tents of the infantry, and the works where the cannon were waiting, under the red-cross flag of England.

"There!" he shouted, as a puff of smoke burst from the mouth of a nine-pounder. "They're beginning again. Wish I could see a cannon-ball fly!"

In an instant more he was astonished to find that that could almost be done. The

piece had not been badly aimed, and the iron messenger chipped off the point of one of the tall tree-trunk pickets.

“I did see it!” he exclaimed. “It went too high. No, it’s done something! If it hasn’t butchered one of the general’s beef critters!”

There lay the ox, with its head struck off and a brace of volunteers stepped coolly toward it, remarking:—

“Fresh beef, boys! We won’t waste it.”

Another ball came over, shortly, to set on fire a small hayrick, but the blaze was quickly extinguished, for the fort had no hay to spare, just then.

Jack was once more looking out, and he was thinking:—

“I couldn’t hit one of them at this distance, but then, it’s as bad for them. They can’t do anything yet, except with their cannon. Hullo!”

His face clouded suddenly, for at that moment a heavy shot was sent correctly, and one of the pickets within ten feet of him was badly shivered.

“That’s what they can do, is it?” he said; but other eyes than his were critically watching the effect of the British fire, and a clear, ringing voice at a little distance, remarked:—

“That is what I wanted to know, Colonel. They have the range. They will give us a hot time to-day.”

Jack stepped a few paces nearer the group of mounted officers, for the colonel was using a telescope for a study of the enemy’s operations, and General Harrison seemed to be waiting for his report.

Jack hardly understood the meaning of some of the professionally military criticisms which came first, but then followed something to which the general replied:—

“General Proctor himself? Tecumseh? Holding a conference are they? Watch them, now, while I ride over for a look at the other side and the river.”

Away rode the general, and his subordinate was now taking his observations through the opening made by the cannon-ball.

“O! how I would like to get a look at them!” exclaimed Jack.

"Would you, my boy?" said the officer, pleasantly. "Take one, then. We owe you something for those despatches. Tell me what you think of it."

Jack felt as if somebody had suddenly offered him a new farm. Never before had he looked through a telescope. The colonel told him how, and he shivered with excitement as he took aim through it at the spot indicated.

"Out there in the open," said the colonel. "That gang of men in uniform. What do you make of them?"

"Right in the middle of 'em," replied Jack, "big man in cocked hat, sword, feathers. There's a tall Indian facing him with a tomahawk. Looks as if he were blowing him up. Seems to be mad."

"Look hard, Jack!" said the colonel. "Your eyes are better'n mine. I guess I know what it means. It's something you'll never see again."

"He is shaking his tomahawk, now," said Jack. "The other redskins are mad, too. One of 'em's whooping."

“That’s it,” laughed the colonel. “No British soldier would dare behave in that way. But the Indian chiefs won’t submit to any kind of control. My boy, it isn’t bad news. That is General Proctor; and the chief who is blowing him up is Tecumseh himself. I’d give a good deal to know what their quarrel is.”

“Oh, but ain’t I glad I’ve seen ’em!” said Jack. “Wish he’d hit him with that hatchet. It’d be a good thing for us. He’s stopped now, and the general is talking.”

Tecumseh did not tomahawk the British commander, but it was of much importance to the Americans that the latter was firmly rejecting the angry demands of the Shawnee chieftain. The altercation which Jack and the colonel could not hear, ran along somewhat like this:—

“Tecumseh is a great chief,” said General Proctor, “but he has never yet captured a strong fort. We must knock a wide hole in their works before we can get in. We will cannonade them till we are ready.”

“Ugh! No!” responded the red leader,

angrily. "Proctor no head. Not many rifles in fort. No wait! Take fort right away. Harrison's eye good — see a long way. Tecumseh know him. Caught him in trap now. Proctor wait, like old woman; then Harrison get away. Proctor heap fool. Big guns no good; plenty men take fort, Tecumseh know."

The general was well acquainted with Indian character, and knew that he must keep his own temper, even if Tecumseh and some of his allied chiefs lost theirs entirely. He smiled, and argued, and adhered to his own opinion, which had an outside appearance of being a pretty wise one. So far as he knew or could calculate, Fort Meigs was completely in his power. Its surrender could be a question of a few days only. He therefore saw no reason for throwing away soldiers in an attempt to capture it at once by storm. It was manifestly better to wait for a breach in the wooden wall. That done, his veterans could charge in over any possible resistance by the garrison, and all his Indian swarms could follow.

Jack was watching through the telescope,

at the very moment when the chief turned furiously away, accompanied by the other redmen. They were to have a grand war-dance that very evening, intending it as a preparatory ceremony, on account of the battle and victory which was to come on the morrow. They might now have their dance indeed, but they were to be compelled to bottle up their war spirit and abide the cool decision of their British commander.

“Jack,” said the colonel, “come along with me. You must tell General Harrison what you saw. Your eyes are sharper than mine are, telescope or no telescope. I’m old, and I don’t see as well as I did.”

So there had been a practical reason for his good nature to his young friend, and the two went together to headquarters.

It was a great honor, and Jack felt it so that his cheeks burned like fire; but he forgot all that was left of his limp when he stood before the victor of the Tippecanoe battle. Many were the stories he had heard of Harrison’s personal courage and perilous adventures. Some of them belonged to the

old days of the war for the conquest of New York and Ohio, when he had been a mere aide-de-camp on the staff of General Anthony Wayne, and all the years of his after life had been filled with them, like so many beads on a string.

He now questioned Jack very quietly, but thoroughly, and it was almost a wonder that so much had been seen. In fact, Jack did not know at all what important notes he had taken, until his observations were brought out and interpreted under the general's keen cross-examination.

"That will do, Colonel," he said at last. "He may go now. The Indians are a good deal more than discontented. One thing can be read plainly enough; Proctor would be unable to restrain them in case we surrendered. He has not troops enough, indeed, to prevent a massacre, even if he were willing to shoot down his own allies."

"That's a thing he'd never do," said the colonel, shaking his head sadly. "There would be no help for us."

"I have never, for a moment, thought of

surrendering," exclaimed the general, hotly. "I'd rather die. We will fight to the last. At all events, their cannonade is slackening, now."

Jack went out with a darker idea than ever of the desperate nature of the army position. It seemed to him that he could almost imagine the parade-ground inside the stockade swarming with red savages.

There were two reasons for the cessation of the British firing. One was that night had come, and the other was a delay in the arrival of cannon-balls for their artillery. As Jack was walking along to his own barrack, he saw some men with lanterns, halfway between him and the stockade.

"I wonder what they're up to," he thought. "What are they digging there for? Is it some place to hide in?"

Over he went, and in a few minutes more he felt gloomier still, for one of the diggers answered him:—

"What's this trench for? Why, it's a grave, my boy. I'm afraid we'll have to dig a good many before we get through.

Some were killed to-day by cannon-shot, and some died in the hospital."

It was true that the losses had not as yet been severe, but this was only the first day of the siege. Gangs of men were at work repairing, as well as they could, the damage done to the stockade, here and there, but Jack could understand better, now, what a cannon-ball can do, and he said: —

"They'll knock more holes to-morrow."

The fort was very quiet, and so was everything outside of it for a considerable distance. The camp of the British regular troops was on the river bank, toward the lake, and was in no danger of any sortie of the garrison. The lake itself was about a dozen miles away, and supplies could come to Proctor by water. Next to the British camp was a wide forest area occupied by lodges and wigwams which appeared almost deserted an hour or so after sunset. Some distance beyond this, up the Miami, there were yet larger numbers of lodges; most of them were hastily erected booths. Here were the headquarters of Tecumseh, Olliwa-

chica, and other notable redmen. Just how many tribes were represented, nobody knew, for of several tribes, there were clans which had refused to take up the hatchet. It was understood, however, that the central body of Shawnees had been joined by large numbers of Chippewas, Ottawas, Menominees, Winnebagoes, Sioux, Wyandottes, Pottawotomies, and Wabashes, with a few warriors from even the far-away Creeks and Seminoles. Few, if any, were the white witnesses of the grand war-dance which took place out here, in a natural meadow among the woods, after the darkness came and the fires were lighted. It might have been bad policy for British officers of rank to be there, in view of the unpleasant quarrel between General Proctor and Tecumseh.

The dance was a wonderful affair, nevertheless, under the especial supervision of the great prophet, Olliwachica. Every warrior present was arrayed in all the gaudy finery he was owner of, and paint had been put on extravagantly. An Indian war-dance consists, in part, of a sort of boasting match,

and the prophet opened this with a weird war-song of his own. It was an eloquent, inflammatory appeal to the patriotism and all the other emotions or passions of his audience. He described with vehemence their many wrongs and losses at the hands of the wood-chopper settlers and of General Harrison's riflemen. The latter, he told them, were now in their power, ready for their knives, and he promised them sure victory if Proctor would strike at once.

Wild were the whoops and yells that answered him. Chief after chief and warriors of renown added their furious declamation, and thousands joined in the dance that followed, — the customary theatrical imitation of the deeds of Indian braves on the war-path, including the supposed destruction of their enemies. The whooping and yelling were terrific, and much of the acting was exceedingly vivid.

This was not all, for the prophet's appeal to their thirst for blood had yet another horrible feature.

There were white prisoners in the hands

of the savages, reserved, perhaps, for such an occasion as this. The dance went on, therefore, around stake after stake, to which helpless victims, men and women, were bound for tortures and for death by fire.

The night waned, — the war-dance ended, and there were heaps of ashes at the places where the stakes were set. The garrison of Fort Meigs might well determine that they would fight to the bitter end.

CHAPTER IX

The Gap in the Stockade

“WELL, Sarah! You’ve done it!”
“Joshua,” she responded, making one more cast with her shuttle, “I couldn’t sit still and do nothing. The men set it up for me first-rate! Betty found some wool, too —”

“This ’ere spinnin’-wheel’s a real good one,” came cheerfully along with a whir of a spindle. “I reckon I can do some knittin’ after I’ve made the yarn. Wish there was more wool.”

“Best thing for you two women. Better than moping ’round the fort.”

Not in Major Croghan’s quarters, but in a comfortable room at the other end of the long barrack, Mrs. Morgan’s rescued handloom had been set up, and her spinning-wheel ordered to duty. She turned around now, upon the bench in front of it, and her

face had almost a contented look. At that moment (for the door was open and the warm air of spring was pouring in) her great gray cat came over the threshold, followed by three half-crazy kittens.

"There!" said Betty. "It ain't o' no use for the men to take 'em to their quarters. She gathers 'em right back here. I reckon it's the loom. It kind o' makes her feel at home."

"Home?" came from Mr. Morgan's lips; but he choked it back, so that his wife did not hear it, and asked her, "What sort o' stuff are you weaving, Sally?"

"Why," said she, "I wouldn't ha' thought it, but there's plenty for me to work with. I reckon it'll be for Jack. He'll need a new jeans suit, right away, after he gets back from Fort Meigs."

"That's so," he said. "Weave away. It'll be warm weather, then. Spin all you can, Betty."

But something or other may have been on his mind, for his face changed a little at the word "Meigs," and he walked slowly out

into the fort parade-ground. The women went on with the peaceful, homelike work that was doing them so much good. The cat and kittens went to sleep in a box in a corner.

"Major," said Morgan, as he met the young commander a little later, "is there any news from the Miami?"

"Not a word," said Croghan, gloomily; "but our scout-canoe reports all the west end o' the lake crowded with boats. They saw three of the British squadron, too. It looks as if Harrison were shut in. I wish I knew what Commodore Chauncey and Captain Perry are doing. What we need is the use o' this lake."

Those last days of April and the beginning of May were full of events elsewhere, and Croghan might have felt better if he had known about some of them.

Commodore Chauncey and his new squadron, on Lake Ontario, had struck a halfway successful blow, in connection with a land force, for the reduction of the British fort at Toronto, the freedom of the St. Lawrence,

and the possession of the lake. There had also been sharp actions here and there on the high seas, but nothing was yet known of them in the backwoods, and the future of Lake Erie was closely connected with that of Lake Ontario, not of the ocean.

On the morning after the great dance, the boastful speeches, and the prisoner burning, Tecumseh's allied redmen were sulking among their lodges. They had had an exhausting debauch of vanity and cruelty, not without the additional evil of strong drink, although the use of liquor was positively forbidden by the wise authority of Olliwachica and his warrior brother. This was one of several important points concerning which they could not control their adherents.

It was not so among the riflemen under General Harrison. One of his first military lessons from that really great commander, General Anthony Wayne, had been that of invariable temperance, and he now strictly enforced it among his soldiers.

"I haven't seen a tipsy man since I came to the fort," remarked Jack. "I'll never

drink anything. Father doesn't. The general won't. They're all the example I want."

He was beginning to see and understand many more things relating to good discipline and management as he went around, limping less and less from day to day.

"He seems to be everywhere," he said to himself. "There can't a British cannon-ball strike, but the general is there in a minute to see what it did."

So, for that matter, was Jack himself. He had an intense curiosity concerning the work of that artillery.

"Captain Andrews told me," he said to Jim Waller, "that as soon as they can make a wide enough gap they'll be sure to dash in."

"Of course they will," said Jim; "and that'll be the end for all of us. Now, Jack, as soon as there's any such hole in the stockade, do you come and tell me. I want to be carried and laid down at some place where I can draw a bead onto that gap."

"They'll come in the night, he reckons," replied Jack. "You couldn't hit anything."

"Then," exclaimed Jim, "do you jest lay me right in the gap, or close to it. I'll die there. I could let drive into the crowd, as they came up. I'd hit somethin'. I might knock over three or four, if I had extra guns, before they got to me. Every man in this fort must try an' sell his skelp for all it's worth."

"All right!" said Jack. "I'll get the guns, and I'll be there with you!"

The besiegers were aware that they had a desperately determined foe to deal with, and the cannonading continued, day after day, in spite of the protests of Tecumseh. More Indians were arriving, and all the while the supply of provisions in the fort was disappearing. So was the stockade, at more than one point, although no great harm had been done to either of the heavy-timbered block-houses. The most extensive breach was on the westerly front, opposite some of the first guns put in position by the enemy. They were nearer, now, having been pushed forward to more effective range. There was no means of knowing how much, or little,

harm had been inflicted by the steady answering cannonade of the Americans.

“What do you think, General?” asked one of his officers, as they stood and surveyed the point of danger. “How long can we stand this?”

“Our time has about come,” replied the general, calmly. “We shall have a hard fight to-morrow. This is the 4th of May. Before sunset of the 5th, we shall know whether or not Proctor and Tecumseh can take this fort by storm. They’re coming! We must swing around some of our pieces to bear on this gap. I think they will lose a few men before they get in.”

He was doing everything that could be done, but he knew that the enemy were now strong enough to attack on all sides at once. It was said that the British regulars numbered over two thousand, and the Indians more than three thousand, or, in all, five times the strength of his weary garrison.

“One night more!” muttered the general, as he turned and rode away. “Can it be possible that within twenty-four hours this

army will be gone? Is the United States about to lose its whole Ohio frontier? I don't believe it is! I can't believe it!"

Not even his most trusted officers knew what he really thought about the probabilities, for he would not confess all to himself. The soldiers knew a great deal, however, without being told, and that night they slept with their rifles by them, ready to spring up at any moment and fight for life.

General Proctor was ready at last. He had determined to try an attack in broad daylight, after a sharp morning cannonade should use up the scanty remainder of his cannon-balls, for he had nearly exhausted all that had reached him from Canada.

Ever since the siege began, there had been frequent skirmishing on all sides of the fort. The warriors of the woods had vied with each other in feats of cunning and daring. It had been a marvel how near some of them had crept, unseen, even in the daytime, and the American riflemen at the stockade loop-holes had been kept on the alert. Every now and then some well-aimed bullet would

come whizzing through, and the sender of it would hardly ever expose himself to a return fire. There were many good shots among the garrison, however, and not all of the too venturesome red marksmen had escaped unhurt.

"I've used up twenty bullets to-day," said Jack to Jim Waller, on the evening of that 4th of May.

"Did you hit anything?" asked Jim.

"Can't be sure," replied Jack, "except about one. A redskin let drive from a bunch o' tall weeds over an ant-hill, and the weeds didn't stir again after I fired. I aimed at a silver medal, you know."

"Good mark," said Jim. "You hit him. Every brave the less counts for us. Be sure to help me out there to-morrow."

The night passed slowly, quietly, and the sun of the 5th of May came up behind dark clouds. The telescopes in the fort could not, at first, discover any signs of unusual activity among the besiegers, and the cannon on both sides roared at intervals.

General Harrison mustered his entire force

as if for an inspection parade, and a double allowance of ammunition was served out, all around. The sick and wounded men in the hospitals were given the arms they asked for, since they might be firing from their couches before sunset. There was one exception to this, however, for Jim Waller had risen without help, and before the sun was an hour high he was lying down, rifle in hand, within twenty feet of the gap, and Jack Morgan sat by him.

"Three old muskets and a double-barrelled shot-gun," said Jack, "but they're as good as rifles at this distance."

"Fill 'em with buckshot and slugs," said Jim. "I hope they'll scatter first-rate."

Noon came, and the garrison was ordered to eat its dinner early. While they were eating, the British guns ceased firing, and the officers who were posted as lookouts suddenly left their stations to run hastily to the general.

"They are all in motion, are they?" he responded, to the excited reporters, as he sat on horseback in front of his quarters.

"I expected that. I'm glad they didn't wait till dark. Our chance is better, now."

"General!" shouted Captain Andrews. "Hark! what's that? Hear the yelling and firing up east o' the Maumee!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" rang out the trumpet-like voice of the general. "Boys, Clay and his Kentuckians are here! Thank God! Open that gate! It's our turn to strike now."

Rapid commands of all sorts followed, for all ears could now distinguish, not so very far away, the rattle of a tremendous rifle firing. The general had understood it rightly. Absorbed in his preparations for attacking the fort, General Proctor had permitted himself to be almost surprised. If he had heard of an American force coming from below the Ohio, he had not expected its arrival at this precise time. He may also have underestimated its number, for he did not at once throw his whole strength against it. If he had, he might have driven it back, for General Clay had brought less than three thousand men. He made his attack at once, as

he came, driving before him whatever was in his way, for unless he could reach the fort and join Harrison, his own position would be a very bad one.

"Jack!" exclaimed Jim Waller, as the good news reached them; "now there won't a redskin show in that gap. I shan't git a shot, and you might as well not have fetched the guns. I'll stay and watch, though."

He ought not to have felt disappointed at not being killed right there.

"Jim," replied Jack, "you're all right. Stay here. I'm going out with the men. I want to see the battle. I'll get a shot, somehow."

"It's your luck, this time," growled the disabled scout; "but there'll be a good deal o' fightin' yet, or I'm mistaken."

He was not at all mistaken, for the Kentuckians needed all the help Harrison could give them in cutting their way through. Reaching the fort themselves was all the victory they won,—but it was a very great and important victory. It saved the fort.

Jack hurried away, eager to use his rifle;

but he did not see very much of that battle. Nobody else did, for nearly all of it was fought among woods and bushes. It was a battle of a hundred separate skirmishes, each of them fought by furiously desperate men, red or white, and there was little mercy shown on either side.

"I've seen General Harrison six times," said Jack, toward sunset. "I reckon he tired out more'n one horse. I fired often enough, but I don't know whether I hit an Indian or not. A fellow doesn't shoot so straight when he's excited."

If he did, there would be a great many more men killed in battles, and it is just as well as it is, for enough do go down.

The only real disaster to the Americans was caused by a blunder. A force of Kentuckians followed the beaten enemies in front of them too far, and were compelled to surrender to superior numbers. Hardly had they given up their arms and become defenceless, when a hundred savages rushed upon them. They would have been slaughtered to a man, if it had not been for Tecum-

seh himself. Springing between the slayers and their victims, tomahawk in hand, he forbade the striking of another blow. By voice and vigorous actions he checked the intended massacre, and rescued the remnant of the captured volunteers.

Many months afterward, after the great chief himself had fallen in battle, his family was granted a liberal pension by the government of the United States, and the reason for it was his noble defence of these Kentuckians.

There was a better state of affairs in and around Fort Meigs at the close of the day, but it was hardly a time for rejoicing. The losses had been severe, and the enemy had been checked, not beaten. It was expected that the fighting would begin again on the morrow. Nevertheless, there were now men enough properly to garrison the fort, and the reënforcements had escaped destruction in the forest.

"It's pretty good," said Jim Waller, after Jack had told him all he knew. "The hair's on your head and mine, and there isn't any

British flag a-flyin' over Fort Meigs. Now you go out among the fellers, and find out how they made out to git here. That's what stumbles me. They must ha' come under ground."

It was then too late, and Jack was too tired. So was everybody else, and not much news came to him until the next day. At an early hour of the 6th, the British cannon sounded again, and when they ceased, a flag of truce came to the fort, with a note from General Proctor, demanding an immediate surrender. The entire garrison knew, and now, for the first time, they seemed to have something to laugh about. It raised their spirits more, a few hours later, when they were able to tell each other how severe a reply had been sent back by General Harrison.

During all that time of quiet, Jack Morgan had been on a trading tour among the camp-fires of the Kentucky volunteers. Every man of them had a story of his own to tell, but he might not have been ready to tell it, unless by way of barter and exchange.

"I can tell 'em about the cannonade," thought Jack, at the outset. "They'll want to know, I suppose—" and so he began, but in less than no time it was discovered that he was from Fort Stephenson, and had brought news of Captain Perry's ships. He could ask as many questions as he wished, after that, for he was a newspaper.

Even telling what he knew, however, made him wish for somewhat more recent tidings from the lake shore.

Noon came and went, and Jack was standing among a group of fine-looking men in buckskin hunting-shirts, who were almost merrily ridiculing the British demand for surrender.

"Proctor ought to ha' known General Harrison better'n that," remarked Jack, but at that moment a tall, heavily bearded man interrupted him.

"I say, boy, whar did you come across that thar shootin' iron?" he asked, putting a hand upon it. "Who did you buy it of?"

"I didn't buy it," said Jack. "I won it of

a Shawnee. He was scouting in the woods by our house, just before they burned us out."

"You did, did you?" said the volunteer, half doubtfully. "Well! I'm bound to believe ye, now I've heard what else you've been up to. I was powerful mad when I saw you had it. Jest tell me 'bout that red-skin."

"There isn't much to tell," said Jack; but he went on to relate his winter morning adventure in the forest, and what followed, including his canoe voyage to Sandusky. He ended with:—

"Father said I had a right to keep the rifle —"

"So you had!" almost shouted the Kentuckian. "My name's Kennedy. That thar piece belonged to my brother Bill. He was massacred at the Raisin. You killed the red devil that scalped Bill — that suits me. You may keep the gun; but if you git a chance to draw a bead onto a redskin with it, do you jest hold straight!"

"I reckon I will," said Jack.

The other volunteers around them all agreed that the rifle was fairly his, and the feeling they manifested might account for their daring march from the Ohio River to the Miami, through the wilderness, to rescue the garrison of Fort Meigs.

CHAPTER X

The Long Skirmish

“GENTLEMEN,” said General Harrison to a council of his most trusted officers, “June is very near now. We have been fighting almost every day during three weeks.”

“The fort is safer than ever, General,” responded one of them.

“That is so,” he said; “but it is not all. If we can hold the British army here, with no great battle won for either side, we are wearing them out. It is a very complete victory.”

“We can win it, General, even if the people at the east seem to have forgotten us and left us to ourselves.”

“Let them!” said the general. “We can take care of ourselves. I believe our one black spot is Fort Stephenson. We can’t reënforce Croghan, and I must tell him so.

Mounted messengers can get through to Sandusky. It's best that he should know."

They all agreed with him; and only half an hour later Jack Morgan, at the stockade, as usual, was hailed with:—

"Come on, Jack! Get Polly and saddle her. Bring her to headquarters —"

"What is it, Jim?" interrupted Jack, in a sudden fever. "What's coming?"

"We're goin' to Sandusky —"

"Hurrah! Despatches! I was on Polly yesterday. She's all right."

"But, Jack, you needn't tell anybody. There's been more'n one spy around this fort. If we're to git there, nobody outside must know we're goin'."

"There's the general himself, Jim. We needn't go to the quarters."

He was coming to see his two couriers, but somewhat more for a look at the animals they were to ride — and he said so.

"I'll fetch 'em, General," said Jack; but his commander followed him, talking with Jim as they went toward the corral.

"Polly!" shouted Jack, and her heels were

instantly in the air, while her companion made a playful attempt to bite her.

"That'll do," said the general, laughing. "Most o' the other horses are low-spirited."

"Low feed, I s'pose," said Jim. "But these two'll run as well as ever."

"If you can race through in four or five hours," said the general, "that may be your best chance. It isn't noon yet."

"Jim," said Jack, "we can get there in the night."

"If we don't," he quietly replied, "it's likely we won't get there at all."

Polly and her mate were quickly ready, the thin packet of papers was delivered to Waller, and the general added some things to be given verbally to the commander of Fort Stephenson.

"Mount and ride," he said. "I think you'd better make a race of it. I've sent out about five hundred men to skirmish southerly. That'll draw off attention from the eastern front. It may clear the woods for you. Forward! Go!"

"That's jest old Harrison!" exclaimed

Jim, as they rode through the gateway. "He means that Croghan shall get the papers. I say, Jack, if I'm hit, don't you fool away any chances on me. Take the despatches and race it for Sandusky."

"I couldn't leave you," said Jack.

"Do your duty by the general and the army!" exclaimed Jim. "Your life or mine isn't worth much jest now. Go it!"

All the dense forest south of them was ringing with rifle reports, for the skirmish was a sharp one. It was, after all, only a part of General Harrison's plan of wearing out his besiegers. Well away north from the neighborhood of the combat, Jim led on at a gallop, at first, but the pace had to slacken as soon as thicker woods and undergrowth was reached.

"Jack," he said, "we'd both drop here, most likely, if the redskins hadn't been 'ticed out o' this cover. We won't strike into the road for an hour yet."

They were making all the speed they could, and the rattle of the skirmish was dying away behind them. They had been some-

what separated by a clump of trees and rocks, when Jack was startled by a short, quavering whoop that sounded very near him.

"Dismount! Take a tree!" shouted Jim. "I'm comin'. Don't shoot!"

"I ought to race ahead," thought Jack, "but I'll do as he says. Father'd say so."

Down he sprang, therefore, but Polly was instantly hitched, and her rider had his rifle cocked and ready to shoot when he crouched at the roots of a huge oak. He hardly knew from which direction to look for danger. In a moment more Jim was with him, stooping every bit as cautiously.

"What is it, Jim?"

"That there call? Why, Jack, that's the friendship whoop o' the Maumees, but you ain't jest sure who sounded it. Lie low, now, and keep a sure aim on any redskin I go out to meet."

Then he must have had a Miami teacher, for he imitated the Indian call to perfection, doubling it.

Once more it came to them from those rocks, and was answered as before.

"He's comin'," said Jim. "You can't tell one redskin from another, sometimes, and he's in his war-paint. Watch out, now."

Not a very large man was the strange Indian who had so unexpectedly made his appearance. He was now coming toward them, holding out his right hand, palm up, but his gun was in the other hand, and he might not be alone. He was not, and Jack's swift, searching glances found something instantly. He was not now aiming at the red-man to whom Jim Waller was holding out his hand, saying, "Maumee? Friend? Where come from?"

A few paces behind this one was another, as like him as two peas. He, too, was holding out a welcoming signal, when a rifle cracked away at their right and he fell forward upon his face.

"Jim! Drop! I'll get him! Shawnee!"

Down went the scout and the first Miami, but the next report was from Jack's own piece, and a fierce yell followed it.

"You hit him!" shouted Jim. "I'll hold my fire while you load."

"I didn't see but one," said Jack, and the Miami added:—

"One. Chief saw him. No Shawnee. Winnebago. Know whoop. Know Jim, too. See him at fort. Croghan send Mau-meets to Harrison."

"All right," said Jim, coolly. "That one hasn't stirred since the Winnebago let drive. I'll tell you how to reach Fort Meigs."

He did not have a good chance for doing so, nevertheless, until after the surviving Miami runner had crept to the dead Winnebago, and secured his scalp.

"That was a good shot o' yours, Jack," said Jim. "Prime good rifle, too."

"Glad he didn't strike you first."

"He took the nearest mark," said Jim. "I was twenty yards farther. Now, mount and give Polly her head. We don't know what ears heard this shootin'."

The friendly Miami disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him, and the two ponies were allowed to do their best for the next quarter hour.

"We may as well pull in, now," said Jim,

at the end of that time. "We're getting close to the road, and the Indians would expect us to keep out of it. Every one o' them would, if he were in your place or mine."

"Jim," said Polly's rider, "you don't know how I want to see Lake Erie. Some day or other I mean to sail a ship there, with our flag on it."

"It'll be a good while before you'll do that," he replied; "but I want a look at the water, or at Fort Stephenson, as bad as you do."

Jim had good reasons for his doubt concerning an American flag on Lake Erie; but at just about this time Captain Perry, or rather Commodore Chauncey, Colonel Winfield Scott, and other American sailors and soldiers, had struck an important blow for it. Captain Perry, soon after his return from Pittsburg, went all the way to Lake Ontario to confer with the commodore concerning naval stores, ammunition, and sailors. He reached the mouth of the Niagara River just in time to aid in the taking of Fort George,

on the Canada shore. As soon as that fort was destroyed, the British abandoned their batteries at the head of Niagara River, near Lake Erie. By so doing, they set free the American vessels, so long penned in. One brig, two schooners, and a sloop could be made ready for a transfer to the harbor at Presque Isle.

General Harrison's brace of couriers were in the road very soon after the affair of the Miami runner and the Winnebago. They were galloping too steadily, now, however, for much conversation concerning either naval or military affairs, but they were getting more and more eager for a glimpse of blue water.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Jack, at last, as they drew rein at the top of a wooded ridge. "I can't see the lake, but I can see the eastern corner of the stockade."

"It's been a pokerish kind o' trip," began Jim, and then he shouted: "Jack! Let her go! Run in! They're here!"

Polly had been let go, for a rifle had cracked, and a bullet had so narrowly missed

Jack's head that it cut some hair from his battered coonskin cap.

"Pretty close!" he said. "Go it, Polly!"

The fort gate was open, and they rode safely in, for no other shot had followed them. After all, it was only one more serious warning to add to the sombre news which they were carrying to Fort Stephenson. Their coming had been seen, and they were waited for by Major Croghan and a rapidly increasing assembly, not many yards within the gateway. Both dismounted, and the ponies were cast loose, while the major held out an eager hand for the despatches, which Jim was taking from under his buckskins. He tore open the larger of several envelopes, and his brave face grew darker, rapidly, as he read what seemed to be a letter of some length. Jack was looking at him, and believed he knew what it meant, but his time for making any report had not come.

"I hardly want to tell him all I've got to," he was thinking, when he heard a half-stifled scream behind him, and a pair of arms came tightly around his neck.

“Jack! Darling! I’d almost given you up!”

He had expected it. He had been getting ready for it as he rode in. The thought of it had made his heart thump and his blood tingle. Still, he had not been looking for it at this precise moment, and all he could make out to say was, “Mother!”

“Sally Morgan! Don’t choke him! Let him finish up with the major!”

“Shut up, Betty Stowell! Here he is, safe and sound. I believed he was killed. I knew he wasn’t, too, and he isn’t!”

Major Croghan had opened another of his despatches, but he looked away from it with half a smile on his face, to say:—

“You may take him with you, just now, Mrs. Morgan. I shall want to see him again by and by. Jim Waller, come to my quarters. Boys, General Harrison’s army is doing first-rate.”

“Come, Jack, father’s here, too. How well you’re looking! And I wove some blue jeans for you, and Mrs. Jennings made up the suit—she’s a tailoress.”

"Come!" said his father. "We want the whole story. You'll want something to eat, too. They'll take care of Polly."

"Ain't I glad to get here, though?" exclaimed Jack. "But there's been an awful time at Fort Meigs. Any fighting here?"

"Nothing to speak of," replied his father, as Mrs. Morgan pulled her son along with her; "but I did something. I went with a squad on horseback to our old place, only last week. The house is gone, of course, but that wheat is fine! I never saw a more promising crop."

"Hurrah for that!" said Jack. "Tell you what; we must save that wheat."

Away they went, while all the garrison was waiting impatiently to get hold of him and Jim Waller as soon as possible.

"O Jack!" said his mother. "I want to hear it all, but Mrs. Jennings and Betty and I and the other women have kept the loom and two spinning-wheels going every day. We've made new clothes for the Jennings girls and the boys, too —"

"Mother," said Jack, "we had a great battle. We beat 'em, too."

That was where his story really began, and it was late in the next day before it was finished. Before that time, however, Jack had spent an hour with Major Croghan, and knew more clearly than ever that he had brought dark tidings. General Harrison had sent word that he saw no possibility of sending a reënforcement to Fort Stephenson.

"We must look out for ourselves, then," remarked the major. "There are very few of us to hold this long stockade."

Everything around the harbor of Sandusky wore a peaceful look, nevertheless, in those first days of June. Now and then, to be sure, a white sail appeared in the offing on the lake, but always too far for any eyes on shore to see that under it were the threatening guns of a warship. From day to day, the scouts reported signs of Indians in the neighborhood, but there was not so much as a small skirmish to record. There were many, large and small, over at the Miami, and the long, tedious battle there went on

very much as General Harrison had expected or almost wished.

As for the British squadron, now free to sail where it would, there was much cruising for it to do, and if it had been managed a little better, there would have been no fighting on the lake during that entire year.

Captain Finnis of the royal navy, or his scouts, must have been asleep, or they and he would have known that Master Commandant Perry was at this time towing his brig, sloop, and schooners up Niagara River and out into Lake Erie. They were heavily laden with supplies of all sorts for the new craft building at Presque Isle; but they were not in fighting trim. Two hundred men and scores of yokes of oxen were tugging them against the rapid current and adverse winds.

Perry himself lay sick with fever on the deck of the foremost vessel, but he was directing affairs, all the same, and he could even shout with the rest when the lake was reached and the sails could be spread.

Now came a time of intense excitement.

No British sail was in sight, but the winds were still unfavorable, and all their tacking to and fro seemed hardly to carry them forward. They did gain slowly, slowly, and at last the point of Presque Isle was in sight.

So was not the enemy, however, and there was tremendous cheering on board and on shore when the last tack carried them all over the bar and into the land-locked harbor.

The danger of losing everything was over, but hardly three hours later the entire British squadron made its appearance — too late.

The news of Perry's remarkable success reached Fort Stephenson some days later, but nobody there could see that it promised any relief for the land forces that were so terribly hemmed in at the western end of the lake.

"Jack," said Jim Waller, when he came to tell him about it, "that's all there is. What do you think?"

"Just what I was hoping for," said Jack. "I'm going to sail on an American ship on the lake, some day."

His mother had stopped her everlasting weaving to listen.

"Why," she exclaimed, "you're going to be a farmer!"

"Well, yes," he replied, "so I am. But I want to sail in something bigger'n a canoe. Jim, if there's going to be a battle on the water, you and I ought to be in it somehow."

"I will if I can," said Jim; but Betty Stowell gave her wheel a spiteful whirl, and exclaimed:—

"Ships! They want sailors, not wood-choppers. They don't fight with rifles—they do it all with cannon. What do you know about ships?"

"I reckon I could learn," said Jim; "but I was thinkin' most about General Harrison. They say that Tecumseh has raised five thousand warriors to join Proctor."

"They won't stay," interrupted Mrs. Morgan. "He can't feed 'em. There are more volunteers from Kentucky and Ohio, too. Harrison can hold 'em off and tire 'em out."

"That's what he'll do," said Jim; "but

what if the British run in and burn up Perry's boats before they're ready."

"They say he's just the man not to let 'em do it," said Mr. Morgan; and he did not tell them the other thing that was heavy on his mind, for Major Croghan had said to him that day:—

"We may be sure that as soon as the British and Indians let go of Fort Meigs, we shall see them here. They'll come."

CHAPTER XI

The Coming of Pohig

“FATHER,” said Jack, “do you s’pose there is any such thing as making peace with the Indians? Sile Jennings and I were talking about it. So was Jim.”

“No, there isn’t,” said Mr. Morgan. “The chiefs can’t control what they call their bad Indians. General Harrison himself can’t control angry white men. Sooner or later all the redskins’ll be killed or driven away.”

“It’s kind o’ hard on them,” said Jack. “They had a first right to this country.”

“Did they?” asked his father. “What Indians had any right to what country? There never was any real Indian ownership anywhere. All the land ought to belong to the men who clear it and make use of it. The Indians won’t do anything to improve it, and they must go.”

Jack made no reply, for he had been

studying the matter, and it seemed to him that Tecumseh and his tribes had a great deal of justice on their side. He knew, however, that all the settlers took the same view that his father did, and that all the power of the United States sustained them in it.

Just at this moment one part of Mr. Morgan's meaning was put a great deal more plainly by Jim Waller.

"You see," he said, a little savagely, "all along the frontier, away up and away down, there are men who have seen jest what the red wolves can do. Some on us have seen 'em do it. What they haven't seen, they've heard tell, and they won't forget it. About the wust on 'em are the men who have had their wives or children, or near of kin, tortured or skelped. All o' those men are bent on havin' revenge, treaty or no treaty, peace or no peace. I s'pose it's jest so with some o' the young braves on the other side. Whether they're white or red, any o' that kind o' men mean to kill if they get a chance, and so the border war goes on, all the while."

"It's a murderous business," groaned Mr. Morgan; but Jack got away to go and find Sile Jennings and have another look at the defences.

"I wish we had some o' the men from Fort Meigs," he thought; "they can't all be needed there. I reckon, though, they couldn't get here. Too many Indians in the way, now. Five thousand! That's a good many!"

He had more than usual on his mind that day, for in a minute or so more he was saying to a stout-looking, tow-headed fellow of about his own age: —

"Come along, Sile. I want to see something the major's been having done while I was away."

"Well," replied Sile, "I heard him say he meant to do all he could. He kept half the garrison all the while diggin' and settin' bigger pickets."

"Cannon-balls'll smash timber," said Jack. "I've seen 'em do it."

Evidently Sile regarded with much respect another boy, who had actually been in a big

battle. All he had ever seen was a skirmish in the night.

Out they went, at a gateway, and then Jack turned to study something that ran all along that front.

"Come on down into it," he said. "It's more like a long cellar than like anything else. Now the grass is up, though you can't see it ten rods away. I went out yonder and looked."

"Cellar?" said Sile. "No, it isn't. What's it for? Is there anything like it at Fort Meigs?"

"No, there isn't," replied Jack; "unless it's the Maumee River on one side. This here's on all sides. We couldn't hit any feller after he got down into it. He'd be safe till he began to climb out."

That was the way it looked to a very green young soldier. The ditch which had cost so much hard digging was nine feet wide, and nowhere less than six feet deep. It seemed to the boys that the stockade behind it could be shot at or climbed over just as well, in spite of so much deep cellar.

"I read about ditches around English castles," said Jack; "but father said that those moats were kept full of water. If this thing had water in it, I s'pose 'twould wet their powder. That'd be something."

"They'd have to swim, too," said Sile, "and we could shoot 'em in the water."

On the whole, they did not seem to think very highly of this part of Major Croghan's effort to strengthen Fort Stephenson, and some of the men agreed with them. He himself believed that he had done nearly all he could, but if the fort was not to be attacked right away, it might yet have to stand a siege.

"Morgan," he was just then saying to Jack's father, "that wheat o' yours. We may need every pound o' provisions. We couldn't hold out a month as it is now. Jack spoke to me about the wheat, yesterday."

"Did he? Now I want to know just what he said," replied Mr. Morgan, with twice as much interest.

"Why," said the major, "you know he has

a good head on him. He said nobody'd care to camp there, now; but thirty or forty men could clear that field in one day, if they had scythes, and cradles, and rakes enough."

"Perhaps they could," replied Mr. Morgan. "I don't see what we could do with it then, though. We couldn't run the risk of hauling it here, and we couldn't stay and thrash it there."

"No," said the major; "but Jack's idea was to put it in ricks and leave it to take its chances. Perhaps no one would happen to find it and burn it."

"Just so," said Mr. Morgan. "The men to cut it could go in boats. That is, they could, safe enough, if it wasn't for the British cruisers."

"We'll try it!" exclaimed the major. "We want that wheat. We'll take a day when there isn't a sail in sight. Start from here at sunset, get there before morning, finish the work, and watch a chance to get back. No mere scouting squad of the enemy'd attack so strong a party. One of these days that wheat'll feed this fort. The govern-

ment buyers'll pay you full price for it. You can turn it right in on their contracts. They'd be glad to save what it'd cost 'em to bring it here. Fair business transaction!"

So Jack had gained his point without knowing how it was done; but he felt tip-top when he heard that a harvesting party had been selected. The needful tools were to be had also, but they were what Jim Waller called "mixed pickles," when they were brought together. Such as they were, all the men chosen were glad of a chance to use them. They had been cooped up at and about the fort, until it seemed like a summer picnic to get out on the lake and go to a bit of farm-work.

Only two days later, the lookout at the point reported that nothing at all was in sight on the lake. The wind, too, was from the west, so that boats might easily keep out of the reach of a sailing vessel, tacking against it.

"Mr. Morgan," said Major Croghan, "now's your chance. I'll send fifteen men with you, under Sergeant Nash. It isn't prudent to

weaken the garrison too much. You and Jennings, and your other friends, and the boys, make about as many more. Keep well in toward the shore, and I think you'll be safe enough. Get away just after sundown."

That meant that the entire party, in six boats, none of them large, was to pull out of the inner Sandusky Harbor and into the bay beyond. There, at the bushy shore, they were to keep still until the shadows of night should settle over the lake.

Jack was in the very canoe that had brought him to Sandusky, but it had a stronger crew now. Instead of his mother and Betty Stowell, it contained Mr. Morgan, Mr. Jennings, and Jim Waller. Instead of one boy it had three, for Tom and Sile Jennings had gone into Jack's boat, as a matter of course. All were well armed, and not one of the other boats had a crew of better marksmen.

The outside point was reached, and the boats were bush-hidden, as if their errand were done; but, after all, no one could guess what eyes or glasses were watching them.

"The lake's a trifle rough," remarked old man Jennings, "but the sky is clear. We'll have a good night."

"Rough water's a good thing," said Mr. Morgan, "if we're to be shot at. No man can plumb centre from a dancing canoe."

"There won't be any shootin'," put in Jim Waller. "We're all right, if we can get there before sun-up."

"Morgan," said Sergeant Nash, coming toward them, "the sun's down, but it isn't dark enough yet. I must make every man get back under cover. You're in sight from the water, just now."

"He's right, Morgan," said Jennings; "you and I ought to ha' known better."

A gray-headed, brawny veteran was the sergeant. He had been with General Harrison in more than one campaign, and all who knew him had much respect for his opinions on war matters. One asked, now, if it would be wise to build a fire.

"Not a blaze nor a smoke," replied Nash. "It'd cost us the wheat. They patrol all this shore, and we don't know what'll turn up."

Settlers as well as soldiers considered themselves under his orders, and quickly the beach looked entirely deserted.

The woods were almost black, now, and a deep gloom covered the lake.

"We'd better be even too careful," Mr. Morgan was saying to Jim, when the sergeant touched his arm, and blew a whistle like that of a quail.

"Sh! Jack!" whispered his father. "Not a loud word. That means silence."

There had been talk going on, and the moment the rattle of voices ceased, it was easy to understand the sergeant's meaning.

"Father," said Jack, "musket report."

"Three or four of 'em. Hush!"

"Ready, men!" called out the sergeant. "Something's coming! There!"

It was the boom of a cannon this time, and now around the point came skimming a mere cockleshell of a fishing-boat, that seemed to be carrying a sail made for a craft of twice her size. Not far behind it were several rowboats, and in the offing, less than half a mile away, were the sails of the Brit-

ish cruiser which had fired the heavy gun. She was now blazing away again, and all the men in the pursuing boats, who were not rowing or paddling, were busy with muskets and rifles.

“Boat ahoy!” roared Sergeant Nash. “Put in here! Party here from the fort!”

“Ay, ay!” came hoarsely back. “They’ve hit two of us. Despatches from Captain Perry to Major Croghan.”

“Beach her! Beach her!” shouted Nash. “Ready, boys? There they come. Morgan, have your fellows let ’em have it. Soldiers, hold your fire! Steady, now!”

The mast of the fugitive sailboat snapped like a pipe-stem as she struck the beach, and her enemies were only fifty yards behind her. Five large boats full of men, with a cruiser to help, had very nearly succeeded in making an important capture.

“Forward, all!” shouted a voice of command out on the water. “Run ’em ashore! Cut ’em down and search ’em! No quarter! Oh!”

Perhaps his voice had aided some marks-

man on the shore in singling him out. At that moment a dozen rifle reports rang out. His cruel order was hardly uttered before he pitched heavily overboard, — dead.

The crowded boats had made fair marks at that short distance, even in the dusk, and several other bullets had done mischief.

“Sile,” said Jack, “I believe I hit one. We’d better load quick, though. Here they come.”

The Americans might have been caught with empty pieces if it had not been for the prudence of Sergeant Nash. As it was, less than half had fired at once, and all the enlisted men had “held” for further orders.

As the boat’s mast broke, and her sail fell, three men sprang ashore, one of them carrying a small black satchel.

“Forward, under cover, quick!” shouted Nash. “This way. Who is it?”

“Pohig, from Master Commandant Perry. One Maumee, one berry brack nigger, two seamen, wounded.”

“Advance, Pohig and party,” gravely responded Nash. “Now, boys! Not till jest

as those fellows land. Don't throw away a shot!"

Probably the charging enemy had estimated the number opposed to them by the first volley fired. It seemed, therefore, the right thing to make a swift rush, but they were sadly mistaken. Out they dashed from boat after boat. One canoe-load poured over into the stranded sailboat, and in an instant more there were no merely wounded seamen, for tomahawks and knives had come.

So, too, had swift and unexpected retaliation, for the hidden riflemen were obeying the sergeant. They were not wasting many bullets, and the first squad which had followed Pohig was down, to a man,—that is, to an Indian, for no redcoats were to be seen among them.

Wild were the yells of wrath and astonishment, but every warrior instantly understood what a trap he had fallen into. Their boats were their only hope, and they did not hesitate. While the Americans were hurriedly reloading, the baffled redmen were afloat again, paddling for their lives. They had

managed to take their wounded with them, but two of their boats were left, and no less than seven dead braves. There may have been more in the canoes.

"Pohig," said Sergeant Nash, "leave your boat here. You and your two men take one of those canoes. Pull to the fort. You are safe all the way. Report from me to Major Croghan that we haven't lost a man."

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded Pohig, touching his hat, sailor fashion. "'Tisn't the first time I've been on a lee shore."

"Are you hurt at all, yourself?"

"Not a touch, sir. That British gunboat had the wind of us. Her skipper's a lubber, or she'd ha' overhauled us."

"Jack!" said Jim Waller. "He's an Indian! If he isn't, shoot me!"

"No," said Jack, "he isn't. He's one of Captain Perry's sailors."

"He's a redskin," insisted Jim. "First time I ever heard one on 'em speak without a grunt. Never saw one on 'em touch his hat before, either. Wish I knew where he came from."

Pohig received further orders and instructions silently, and went at once to the canoe given him, transferring to it some small matters from the stranded sailboat he was leaving behind. At the same time, the sergeant was hastening the departure of the harvesters.

"We're safe, now," he said. "That canoe party won't halt short of Malden Harbor. The gunboat'll go with 'em."

"Now for the wheat, then," said Mr. Morgan. "Whoever commanded those fellows was kind o' foolhardy to make a dash ashore, so near the fort."

"Don't know 'bout that," replied Sergeant Nash. "His chances seemed pretty good. I'd ha' tried it myself."

Off went the boats, and there was vigorous paddling, for a while, with a prudent care to keep near enough to the land to reach it quickly in case of more danger on the water. It was hard to say whether the distance to be travelled were shortened or lengthened by the excitement they were in, and by the watchful outlook for more bark canoes and British cruisers.

"Father," said Jack, at last, "there's plenty of cover on the eastern shore of our cove. Let's land there."

"No," replied his father. "We'd best keep out o' rifle shot of any kind o' cover, till we know what's in it."

"Well," said Nash, for he heard him, "I reckon they haven't picketed the whole lake shore. I'm mad, yet, at the murder o' those two wounded sailors. The red wolves! Jest like 'em! I lost a brother at the Raisin."

"I'm afraid our folks won't forget that affair, right away," said Mr. Morgan.

"Nor Fort Mimms, either," called out a voice from another boat.

"I say, Josh Morgan," exclaimed old man Stowell, "have you forgotten the burnin' o' your house? I haven't forgiven 'em for mine."

"I shan't forget poor Sol Watson," said Jennings, savagely. "You needn't be too soft-hearted, Josh. 'Twon't do."

"I shall never take revenge!" said Mr. Morgan. "It's kind o' Indian."

There were other speakers, here and there, most of them too much in accord with the sergeant, and then a long silence followed, for they were entering Morgan's Cove, and it was near daybreak.

"Jest a leetle more light," remarked Joe Stowell, "and a feller could see the sight of his gun."

"Not in the shade o' trees and brush," said the sergeant. "We're all right yet, but we must get ashore before any scout there can make us out. You see, anything on the water'd be supposed to be British."

He was himself the only man present in the uniform of the United States regular army, and it looked as if he had worn it a good while. All of his men were in irregular uniforms of buckskin and homespun jeans.

"Now!" he called out. "Pull for the clearin' at the head o' the cove. We're all British till we're under cover."

On they went, swiftly, keeping well together, and ready for whatever might turn up.

"Who comes there?" demanded a loud voice from the beach they were aimed at.

"Scouts from up the lake," promptly responded the sergeant. "We left the *Chippewa* and the other boats, off Sandusky Point, last night. Who are you?"

"Lieutenant Keese and four Ottawas. We killed two Yankee skulkers in the woods, yesterday."

One of the four redmen with him was at that moment holding up triumphantly the bloody token he had taken. Another quicker of sight, or more watchful, had put his hand to his mouth to utter a war-whoop. The two other warriors were even cocking their guns, but they were all too late. The lieutenant's boast of the killing he had done was not completed, for he fell forward on his face. The war-whoop was cut in twain by a rifle bullet, and there was no finger on either trigger of the half-cocked muskets. A dozen rifles had cracked from the boats, and not one of them had failed of its mark.

"I got the lieutenant," said Jim Waller.

"I went for the skelper," shouted old man Stowell. "One for Sol Watson! He was a real good feller."

CHAPTER XII

A Harvest of Peril

THERE were hundreds of skirmishes on the American frontier during the war of 1812-1815. There were terrible sufferings, remarkable adventures, daring exploits. Only a few of these were recorded. These were preserved as local legends and family traditions, for a generation or so, and then disappeared. In a military point of view, however, the net result of these minor affairs was of more importance than all the great battles.

At the beginning of the summer of 1813, it must have appeared to the British government, at its London office, that its grand plan was working successfully. The Americans had apparently suffered severe defeats, had lost important posts and forts, and seemed to have given up Indiana and Michigan, that is, all of the country west of the Ohio line.

Transatlantic critics, however, may have failed to see, as General Harrison saw, that the Miami of the lakes really marked the American military boundary. All the defeats of the United States troops elsewhere, including the surrender of Detroit by General Hull, and the ruin of General Winchester's forces at the Raisin, had resulted from attempts to venture beyond an established or tenable occupation. So long, therefore, as General Harrison should hold Fort Meigs, and Major Croghan should hold Sandusky, the British army had gained no permanent advantage. Kentucky and all the more settled parts of Ohio were protected.

Meantime, the strength of the forces under Tecumseh and General Proctor was steadily wearing away, while the resources of the patient, far-sighted American commander were from month to month increasing.

The one dark feature of all this continual skirmishing was the merciless cruelty by which too much of it was stained, for it became a war of revenges.

The boats in Morgan's Cove in the dawn

of that summer morning dashed on to the shore.

"Cover, boys!" yelled Sergeant Nash. "We don't know how many more are in the woods. Lie low till we can scout 'round!"

They obeyed on a run, hardly pausing for glances at the bodies of Lieutenant Keese and his four Ottawas.

"Sile," said Jack, "if they hadn't ha' taken us for Britishers, they'd ha' let drive. They couldn't ha' helped hitting some of us."

"They trapped themselves," said Sile; "but how they could ha' peppered us."

"If there'd been any more redskins anywhere near, I reckon they'd ha' whooped," said Joe Stowell. "'Twouldn't be like 'em to hold in."

The first risk was really over, and the scouting to be done was in the woods beyond the wheat-field. Mr. Morgan and the sergeant, with Jack and Sile, halted before what had once been the front doorstep of the house.

"Father," said Jack, dolefully, "it's all gone but the chimney."

"That's a good deal," replied his father. "We had hard work putting up that chimney. They didn't steal the well, either. Only part of the meat house burned, but the stable's gone. The hog-pen wasn't touched. I meant to build a new house, anyhow. But just look there!"

The rising sun could as yet send his rays only into the tree-tops, eastward, but a flood of light poured over and came down into that wide and handsome field of wheat.

"It's a little overripe, I reckon," remarked the sergeant, "but we can gather it. I never saw finer wheat in my life. You ain't broke up."

"Well," said Mr. Morgan, "I lost my hogs and cows, and some log-work, but we saved our lives; that's something. We'll be all ready for a new start. That well's a prime good one."

"We're not safe back to Sandusky, yet," growled the sergeant.

An hour went by, and while a hasty breakfast was cooked and eaten, scout after scout came in to report no signs of lurking enemies.

"We know, pretty well," said Mr. Morgan, "that this party was all from Canada. It doesn't mean that Tecumseh's at work in this direction."

"Yes," said Nash, "Canady. They came in a boat, and it's along the shore, not far away. We must find it. Most likely, from their bein' at the shore, they expected more to come. I don't like the look o' things. Anyhow, we've struck 'em twice, and we haven't lost a man. Best kind o' luck."

The harvesters were soon at work, and so were half a dozen sharp-eyed patrols. The expedition had indeed been a success thus far, but there was no telling what more might be close upon them. The wheat was going down rapidly, and it would be an important supply for the fort, if it should ever get there; but it was of less value, after all, than had been the rescue of Pohig and his small cruiser.

That very seamanlike redman had long since delivered his despatches, and he was now once more standing before Major Croghan. Even the major's curiosity had been

aroused, and he had discovered that this "friendly Indian" was a Narraganset, who had served for years in the regular navy. He had been with Master Commandant Perry at Newport, and was evidently entirely trusted.

"I wish you could get back again," muttered the major, at the end of a series of questionings.

"Pohig get there all right," was somewhat stolidly responded. "No want too many men in boat."

"You don't care to be overloaded, eh?" said the major. "Good! You may have to run for it. Well! General Harrison's penned in at Fort Meigs, but I'll get word from him in a few days."

"Pohig wait," said the Narraganset. "Obey orders."

"You belong to the navy," remarked the major. "You're not under my orders."

"Ay, ay!" said Pohig. "Captain Perry go to Lake Ontario for powder. Mr. Dobbins is in command at Presque Isle. Plenty time. Major give orders."

He evidently understood his duty, and what he had been sent for. He was very little of an Indian, and a great deal of a disciplined man-of-war's-man. He was a short, heavily built fellow, and his beady black eyes could now and then gleam with intelligence.

"All right," said the major. "I think Perry'd rather you should wait. You can be there when he gets back with his powder. Go to your barracks!"

Pohig touched his hat and turned away to follow one of the men. He was out in the air before he again opened his mouth, and then he said gruffly:—

"Messmate, grog and rations. My watch on deck is over. I want to see the cook before I go below."

"All right," laughed the soldier. "We'll give you a good feed. Shouldn't wonder if you was kind o' holler."

Pohig proceeded to explain that he and his companions had spent three whole days beating about and tacking against unfavorable winds, and that their supplies had given out. Of course they had water enough

alongside the boat, and that had astonished him, but during the last twenty-four hours they had nothing more. The one Maumee and the one very black sailor were as hungry as the Narraganset himself. The soldiers were doubly hospitable, perhaps because of the fine opportunity it gave them for obtaining all the news from the eastern end of the lake. No sooner were his rations attended to, however, than Pohig asked them:—

“Where bunk? Hammock? Want to turn in. Keep watch all the way from Presque Isle to Sandusky.”

He looked like just the man to have held the tiller, or at least to have kept a continuous lookout, day and night. It was over now, however, and in a few minutes more it would not have been easy to awake him.

“From what he says,” remarked Major Croghan, “things at the Presque Isle shipyards are getting on finely. There ought to be a stronger fort there, though. Oh, how I wish Captain Perry could send me on a few guns! He can’t, I suppose, until after his ships are launched. Even then, he must

whip Captain Finnis before he can do this place any good."

All things at Fort Stephenson were very quiet, therefore, and the harvesters at the Morgan farm were rushing their work. About twenty of them were now swinging cradles or scythes, while the remainder were on guard, or acting as patrols. Jack and Sile were among the latter, that forenoon, by direction of Sergeant Nash.

"Your youngster knows the land," he said to Mr. Morgan. "He'll do it better than a stranger. A boy's as good as a man, nowadays, anyhow."

"I don't know but Jack is," laughed his father. "He's a better shot than I am. My eyes are not so good as they were when I was of his age."

"Jest so," said the sergeant; "and it's his eyes I want, about this time. He was brought up in the woods, and he'll know how to look for a trail."

He and Sile were hunting for one, like two young Indians.

"Sile," said Jack, as they went into the

woods, "I s'pose your place is cleaned out as bad as this is? Did you have any wheat in?"

"Nigh twenty acres," replied Sile. "We can't get at it, I reckon. We had fifty head o' cattle, and a good start o' hogs. If the redskins didn't hunt 'em all down, most likely they got starved in the winter."

"Mebbe not," said Jack; "the deer get through first-rate. I found out how a few weeks ago. You may get back some of 'em. Your folks can start again, some day."

"We'd all ha' been killed, right there in the road, that night," said Sile, "if your folks hadn't got there—"

"Hullo!" interrupted Jack, stooping to examine something on the ground. "Look here, Sile! I've found it."

"What is it?" exclaimed Sile.

"Why, don't you see?" responded the young trailer. "That British lieutenant we killed wore boots. Only pair around here, I reckon. Here's the marks of 'em. We'd better trace 'em back a way. Keep your eyes peeled, now! It's plain as day."

It would not have been so to any but a frontier boy accustomed to study the footprints of men and animals. There were places where it looked as if the four Ottawas had followed their usual method, and had trodden, one after another, in the tracks of the English officer's telltale boots. At other places they had been less careful, and Jack was able to declare:—

"They were all with him. I say, Sile, we mustn't go too far. We are a mile from the house, now. Let's work around."

They turned, therefore, on a line nearly at right angles with the trail left by Keese and his Ottawas, and Sile proved to have very good eyes of his own. It was his turn next.

"H'sh!" he whispered, as they were getting out from some underbrush. "Lie low! Jack! Here's another pair o' boots."

Nothing of the kind was to be seen, indeed, but here on the soft ground was a distinct footprint.

"'Tisn't his," said Jack. "His had those English hobnails in 'em. This 'ere's a smooth sole, and the heel is one-sided."

"'Tisn't so large, either."

"Pretty fresh, too," said Sile. "Watch out!"

"Slip along, all the while," said Jack, cocking his rifle. "There!"

They were at that moment skulking on behind a fallen tree, and hardly fifty yards ahead of them was a short, frightened-looking fellow in the uniform of a British soldier, staring in their direction. Somehow or other, he had detected, or at least suspected, their nearness; and he was no Indian fighter, for he immediately blazed away with his musket at the very log which protected them. He may have aimed at the tuft of Sile's coonskin cap, for the ball and three buck-shot of his army cartridge hit the bark some inches below it.

"What a wooden head!" remarked Sile. "He's thrown himself clean away!"

"Surrender!" shouted Jack. "Put down your gun, or I'll bore you. Don't you try to load! Drop it!"

The soldier saw two rifles levelled across the log, and he dropped his piece as if it burnt him.

"I surrender!" he gasped. "Don't shoot! I'm all alone. Lost my way —"

"We'll find it for you," called out Sile, and in a moment more the soldier's face grew very red. He had been captured by a pair of boys.

Nevertheless, their cocked rifles looked like sure death, and he was securely a prisoner. Jack at once went forward and picked up the musket, a new and good one.

"'Bout face, sojer!" he commanded. "Straight along north, now. March! If you try anything crooked, I'll shoot!"

"There isn't any 'elp for me!" growled the soldier. "I'm a dead man! This 'ere is 'orrible!"

"March!" repeated Jack, and on they went toward the Morgan place, the boys asking questions all the way.

"Hullo, Morgan!" they heard the sergeant call out. "Look yonder! The boys have brought in some game. Hurrah!"

"Redcoat, I declare!" responded more than one of the harvesters, and every man of

them, with some from the nearer woods, obeyed the recall whistle which summoned them together to meet some possibly arriving peril.

"Tell it quick, Jack!" said his father. "What is it?"

"This chap is all there is of it," replied Jack. "He says his name's Blood, or something like it. He's the last man of the squad we met at the shore. But 'cording to him, there's a boat somewhere, and another squad was to land and join 'em."

Other questions were asked and answered, and then the sergeant deliberately raised his rifle.

"Now, Blood," he said, "will you guide us to where your boat is?"

"Yes, sir! — your honour! — cap'in!" said the poor fellow, his teeth chattering as he looked into the muzzle of that rifle.

"I — I know where it is. My name's Bel-lew not Bel-lud. I never was 'ere before. I'm a pris'ner o' wah. D-don't sh-shoot. Our boat's yon in the bushes by the lake. We 'id it, you know —"



THE TWO BOYS CAPTURE A BRITISH SOLDIER.

"Of course you did —" began Nash, but a voice behind him interrupted with: —

"We found it, Sergeant. It's a prime good canoe. They left one Ottawa to watch it. He's 'counted for."

"Now!" exclaimed Nash, vigorously. "It's all right. We've every one on 'em. We're safe to go on and finish the wheat. Hanks, tie up Bellew, and stand guard over him. Search him."

He was carefully searched, but there was little to find, and Jim Waller kindly told him:

"We never skelp our prisoners or set 'em on fire till after sundown. Reg'lar Indian fashion, you know. Like your fellows did at the Raisin. We cut 'em all up, too."

"I wasn't there, sir," he exclaimed, as they led him away and tied him to a tree. "It's bahbrous to, ah, buhn a fellow No—a— Christian people, ah, buhn pris'ners of wah. I, ah, protest, it's altogethah huncivilized!"

He was securely fettered, nevertheless, and Jim gravely collected quite a heap of brushwood and branches near at hand.

"Hall that's for me, I s'pose," they heard

the captive mutter. "The fiends'll cook me!"

Jim's own explanation of his work was a trifle more civilized. Shooting game being out of the question, he had tried fishing with very good luck. There would be fresh fish to broil for supper, and that heap of fuel was not really intended for the cooking of anything from London. He did not tell this to Bellew, however, and the unfortunate red-coat was left to stare at what might ere long be piled up around him.

The boat which had brought the party under Keese was now at the Morgan landing. A fine day's work had been done on the wheat. It looked as if there might be no more danger from the landward, but Sergeant Nash remarked:—

"Boys! I know what Bellew was caught for. We want his red rig and that of the lieutenant, for two of our men. We'll make a fire at the shore. Then any British that are led in by that blaze'll see a brace o' their own fellows on sentry duty. It'll be jest the pair they expected to find there. Bellew

says it may be a pretty strong party o' Sioux or Winnebagos, he can't tell which. Both o' them tribes were with Proctor and Tecumseh at the Raisin and Fort Meigs."

"My son Tom's about the size o' Bellew," said old man Jennings, "and Bill Warner'll fill the other uniform. It won't be much of a risk for either o' them."

"'Twon't be any risk at all," said Mr. Morgan. "We'll haul one of our boats ashore, in plain sight, and hide the others. Pile some rails and stuff near the signal fire. The rest of us'll keep under cover, not far away. If anything comes, Bill and Tom can drop behind the rails."

"All right!" exclaimed the sergeant. "I can fix it. I won't lose a chance for a shot though, if any redskins come within range."

Several other loud voices responded:—

"I reckon I won't, either."

The only fear might be a hostile arrival before dark, and the deepening shadows were watched with some anxiety. Nothing came, and perhaps the delays which frequently occur to boat expeditions had been at work

beneficially, for there had not been a boat or a sail in sight on the lake at sunset.

The fish were broiled, and Bellew was allowed his fair share, but Jim Waller inquired of him, as a matter of politeness to a doomed prisoner, whether he "preferred being skelped first, or after the fire should get well a-burnin'."

"They're sahvidges!" was all the reply Jim obtained, and Bellew was left to his own imaginings, while a vigorous bonfire was kindled on the beach. This, it was understood, was the very thing that Keese was to have done, by way of telling his friends where to find him. The rail cover for the two redcoated sentries at the shore was made as nearly as might be bullet-proof. Other lurking-places were found or made, not too far away, and then Morgan's Cove had been transformed into a kind of trap, baited well for Sioux, Ottawas, Winnebagos, British, and other redmen.

CHAPTER XIII

The Lake Patrol

“**M**ORGAN,” said Sergeant Nash, as they and several other riflemen sat together, well outside of the bonfire light, “a day or two more of hard work’ll finish the wheat, but I’m afraid none of it’ll ever get to the fort. We need it bad, too.”

“Sending teams for it, and half the garrison with ’em,” replied Mr. Morgan, “might be only to throw away teams, men, wheat, and all. What we can do, now, is to rick it up and cover it well. By and by, if we can boat down plank for a floor, we can thresh it out. Bags o’ grain could be boated. They might even be wagoned, after a while.”

“Fewer wagons,” said Nash; “but it’d be awful risky wheelin’, till things are clearer’n they are now. We’re losin’ some on it by shellin’ out, it’s so ripe; but it’ll run more

bushels to the acre than anything I ever saw. It may turn out fifty bushel."

"Forty, I'd say," was the owner's more moderate estimate; "but it's worth the saving. It may be all the garrison'll have to live on, some day."

Other affairs of farm work and of future rebuilding were discussed; and all the while the two figures in red coats, one carrying a musket, and the other a sword, were sitting or standing or moving hither and thither along the shore. Now and then they would pass out of the glare and return.

There was yet another fire burning inland, not far from the sapling to which poor Bellew was so firmly tethered. He was not altogether lonely, however, for at intervals he had visitors who came to see if his bonds were all right, and to make encouraging suggestions as to his future. He did not really require a guard. He seemed disposed to groan, occasionally, and to remark upon the fiendish cruelty of American white savidges.

"They're a bloodthirsty crew!" he said of

them. "I never took a skullup in me life. They've no hoccasion to burn me up. It's hawful!"

So it was; and yet more firewood had been collected and heaped up where he could see it. There was enough of it to keep the watch-fire and the beach-fire burning all night, and he estimated that there was more of it, decidedly, than would be at all required for his own cruel cremation.

Hours went by, and the men slept or waked by regular watches, with their arms beside them. Out near the woods, also, sentries and patrols were on duty. It was a night which might have been somewhat trying to weak nerves, but there was nothing of that kind among Joshua Morgan's remarkable gang of harvesters.

The moon was late in rising, but at last it sent a pale, silvery glimmer across the unquiet surface of the lake. It was not rough enough for the manufacture of whitecaps, but the waves which beat upon the shore made some noise, quite enough to have concealed the sound of oars at any considerable dis-

tance. It came, therefore, something like a surprise to the inshore watchers, when one of the red uniforms on the beach suddenly halted and drew its sword, while the other levelled its musket at Lake Erie.

"Boys!" exclaimed Nash. "Watch out! They've seen something."

Instantly, then, his long-drawn whistle sent out a warning to all the other men. Counting out such patrols as were too far away to hear and come, there were speedily about two dozen riflemen ready for prompt action.

"They're comin', Sergeant!" called out Tom Jennings, from the beach. "I reckon they're too many for us."

"Fall back then!" replied the sergeant, adding in a low growl: "Hang him! Why couldn't he ha' kept still! He's a greenhorn! Hope they didn't hear him."

There was a half-minute of silence, and then he said to those near him:—

"Quick! Pass the word not to fire till we know who they are! Wait till they reach the shore. Tom has missed it."

"We may have hot work before us," said Mr. Morgan. "We must get the first fire."

"Of course we must," said Nash; "but we can do that when they land."

Away out on the lake a clear and ringing voice was commanding:—

"Halt! Back water! Lie on your oars till I find out what that is. It may be Keese, and it may be not. He's too lazy a chap to stand guard; I know him."

Men who had already rowed or paddled many long miles were very willing to take a rest, and one boat only went forward. All the rest drew slowly closer together, as if by common consent. It was somewhat after the manner of a flock of wild ducks alarmed by "pot hunters."

"Seven boats in all," muttered Nash, for their prows were within the far-reaching light of the unduly brilliant bonfire. "Some on 'em are long-boats. I'd say they might be three men to our one. Men! they can't be Americans. As soon as any fellow gets a good sight, let 'em have it."

That order may also have been a military

blunder. His two redcoated sentries on the beach heard it, and they fired almost instantly. Hardly had their two reports sounded, before they were safe behind the rails, while all along the shore there was a flashing and cracking of too hasty rifles.

"'Tisn't Keese, — I thought so," coolly remarked the British officer in the advanced canoe. "Back, men! He's in the hands of the Yankées. Our cruise is up. There may be a hundred of 'em."

A hurricane of whoops and yells arose in the other boats, and from them also rang out an irregular volley, as aimless and useless as was the firing from the shore.

"Bless me soul!" exclaimed the mournful voice of Bellew, at his stake. "That's Captain Maddox and the patrol. I 'ope 'e'll come to me rescue before I'm skalluped and burnt. It's me only 'ope!"

"I could a' most swear!" roared Sergeant Nash, in strong disgust. "Boys! we've lost our chance! They'll get away."

Swift orders had followed from the British officer, evidently not at all what Nash called

a greenhorn. All his boats were pulling away, and it may be that only his uncontrollable redmen were still throwing leaden pellets at that part of the state of Ohio. It was just so on the other side, for the sergeant was now sitting down on the pile of rails, and he had not emptied his rifle.

"How we might ha' peppered 'em," he said, "if we hadn't warned 'em off!"

"I'm glad we did," responded Mr. Morgan, heartily. "They haven't any idea how many we are, and they'll keep away."

"Yes, but they'll come again," said Nash. "I wish we'd scorched 'em."

"There isn't anything they can think of to bring 'em here," said old Jennings; "they know, now, that Keese isn't at this landing."

"His coat is," said the sergeant. "I don't believe we made a hole in any other coat. It's hard luck."

He was very nearly correct; for at a safe distance Captain Maddox of the British lake patrol was demanding a report on that subject.

"Not one of my men hurt," he muttered. "Three Winnebagos wounded, but

not severely. How they would have swept us, if we'd been fifty yards nearer! So much for trying to make a night landing. I won't do it again very soon."

"Sile," said Jack, "did you shoot? I did."

"So did I," said Sile; "but I'd forgot to put a bullet in, and I reckon I didn't hurt anybody."

Old Joe Stowell broke out into a loud laugh as he listened to the sergeant.

"Nash," he said, "are you crazy? That patrol will pull to Malden and report a strong reënforcement on its way to Fort Stephenson. Troops from the east. They didn't hit a man of us. I reckon Josh Morgan's wheat's safer'n it was."

The disappointed soldier was forced to content himself, and the men lay down again. When the morning dawned, nothing like a boat was in sight on the lake, and all was quiet on the land. The harvesters went to their work, on the whole, with an idea of increased security, at least for the present; but they had first drawn out all their canoes into more perfect concealment.

“There’ll be telescopes hunting for them before night,” remarked the sergeant. “Jest one boat on the shore’d bring somebody to find out what it was there for. Men mustn’t show, either.”

Private Bellew of the British army was informed, by his attentive friend, Jim Waller, that the customary fun of a fire dance had been postponed on account of the skirmish with the command of Captain Maddox, the British losses in which had been awful to think of.

“They carried away whole boat-loads,” he said, and that was the exact truth.

Nevertheless, the prisoner was given a good breakfast, that he might be the better able to endure all that was coming upon him.

By sunset the wheat was all cut, and some of it was in sheaves, but it would require another day, a long one, before the task of putting it into good ricks in the field could be completed. There would be, therefore, many hours more of constant watchfulness, if not of deadly peril. It was not at all unlikely that they might hear again from Captain

Maddox, even if he had at first returned to the Canadian shore to report and obtain a stronger force.

The only suggestion of the sad fact that Lake Erie was patrolled by the enemy, came a little before dark. A solitary sail, or rather a pair of sails belonging to a schooner, went slowly eastward within half a mile of the outer point of Morgan's Cove. There may have been telescopes on that cruiser. She may also have possessed cannon; but her inspection of the Ohio shore did not reveal to her anything worth cannonading. So she sailed on, and her further operations were of no interest to the overwearied harvesters.

Neither were they, or the movements of other British war vessels, of any great importance to Sailing-master Dobbins, in temporary command at Presque Isle. The bay inside of the bar which protected that harbor was wide, and only guns of pretty long range could have done much harm from the cruising ground outside. The real peril, and it seemed very real, might come with a very moderate force of British and Indians, put

on shore within reaching distance. Such a landing might have been securely made under cover of fire of naval guns.

“If anything they’d be likely to send should get here,” said Dobbins, “I’m afraid all our work would have to go. We haven’t men enough to hold anything but the old fort. They could take that, if they had a few guns. Ours are no good to us till Captain Perry gets back with more ammunition. So many Quaker guns!”

Major Croghan, at Fort Stephenson, was under an anxiety of a somewhat opposite nature. He was pretty well supplied with powder and ball for a short fight, but he had only one cannon. It was a serviceable-looking six-pounder, mounted as a field-piece. He could transfer it readily to any corner of the fort, but it had an uncomfortably lonely look.

Pohig, the Narraganset sailor, was critically examining the Sandusky artillery shortly after he was shaken awake, on the morning following his arrival. His first ship duty had been to hunt up his boat companions and make

sure that they had not deserted, for he seemed to have a low opinion of them. The black man and the Maumee were accounted for, and were exhorted as a pair of landlubbers. After that he had responded intelligently to a series of fresh questions from Major Croghan. As soon as he was released, however, his tour of explanation began.

"Captain Perry want to know," he said to himself. "Ask Pohig about fort. Plenty stockade. Short crew. Plenty provisions for short voyage. Run out on long cruise. No gun. Six-pounder! No broadside gun. No long tom. British take fort. Flag come down right away."

He had served in a good school, and knew what he was talking about. He had been familiar with the heavy ordnances which the good sense of American naval commanders was then placing upon all the new war-ships of the Republic. At about this time, as a consequence, their British antagonists were angrily accounting for each successive disaster, by even exaggerated statements of the weight of iron thrown at

their oaken bulwarks. The American guns were fewer in number, sometimes, but they smashed more timber. The one error of the United States constructors, proved by several unpleasant experiences, had been the employment of carronades, short-range guns of heavy caliber.

Master Commandant Perry, himself, was soon to have reasons for condemning that kind of cannon. He and all his fleet were at this hour only too safe at Presque Isle. They had been ready for sea on the 10th of July, but the British squadron, now under the command of Commodore Barclay, was deliberately cruising back and forth in front of the harbor mouth, day after day, with its long-range guns bearing upon the bar. Over this, the larger American vessels, the two new brigs, the *Lawrence* and the *Niagara*, could not pass without engineering help. A pair of huge scows, called by the seamen "camels," had been constructed for the purpose of lifting them over; but no such delicate operation could be performed under the fire of the enemy's artillery. All that Perry

could now do was to finish the preparation of his smaller vessels, drill what men he had, and ask his superiors for more. In one of his letters to Commodore Chauncey, for instance, he wrote:—

“For God’s sake, and your own, and mine, send me men and officers, and I will have the enemy in a day or two.”

The British authorities had also become aware of his weakness, and it was reported that at last they were preparing the destroying expedition which they should have sent in May, before the guns from Pittsburg and any ammunition from Commodore Chauncey reached Presque Isle. If they had any such undertaking in mind, they were too slow about it, for at last the reënforcements arrived. Queer crews they were likely to make, indeed!

“Blacks! Soldiers! Boys!” exclaimed poor Perry, but with them came many experienced seamen, and several entirely competent naval officers.

He might have added that his flotilla was to carry redmen as well as black. A few

were on hand already, and more were yet to come, but the Ohio tribes could not furnish old salts like Pohig.

Three hundred men in all were to handle ten vessels of all sorts, and Perry declared that they would be enough. At the end he was to have several scores more, but not all of seamen. His last assistance was yet to be given him by the frontiersmen themselves, — men who had never before been on board a ship. So for “boys,” he was to follow the example of Jackson and Harrison, and take them in. Almost half of Major Croghan’s garrison at Sandusky consisted of beardless youngsters, and he himself was but twenty-one.

The very water of the lake was falling, rendering the passage of the bar more difficult, and any collision between the hostile squadrons seemed to be indefinitely postponed. Perhaps the commanders of both were equally confident of a victory to be won some day. Commodore Barclay, now in command for England, may not have been aware, however, that while upon his own

vessels there were sixty-three guns, and upon Perry's only fifty-four, the British shot for one full broadside, firing every gun, would weigh only eight hundred and sixty-two pounds, and would be answered from the American cannon by fourteen hundred and twenty-eight pounds of iron.

Another day went slowly by at Fort Stephenson. Despatches arrived, not only from General Harrison, but from other military commanders, but they brought no promise of reënforcement. All that the general could do was to hold his fort and skirmish line on the Miami. He was holding it well, however, and General Proctor's forces were of a very fluctuating character. It was asserted, nevertheless, that Tecumseh and Olliwachica were sustaining him with no less than five thousand warriors.

All of that, all the great naval and military preparations and movements, belong to the history of the war, and nobody but the commanders themselves as yet knew much about it. The harvesters at Morgan's Cove, for instance, were as much in the dark as

were the great masses of the English and American people. They were thinking of themselves and of the wheat, and this was now safe, apparently, from anything but fire.

"It took another day to finish it," remarked Mr. Morgan; "but that lot o' ricks'd feed the garrison all next winter."

"If we don't git it to the fort, we may all starve," replied Sergeant Nash, "but we must get away to-night. I feel as if our escape, so far, is a kind o' miracle. Captain Maddox must ha' let 'em know he found us here. Keese is missin', too. They'll want to know what became of him. They'll be here before many hours."

Everybody else had made the same calculations, and the men were glad to get their marching or sailing orders. That is, unless what Nash gave them might be called paddling orders. So, while the sun went slowly down to the horizon, the whole party disappeared among the bushes along the shore, and even the boats were still kept carefully hidden.

"We won't launch 'em till after dark," said Nash. "You see, boys, if a British party should land, right there in the cove, we could shove off and get away while they were scoutin' 'round."

"I say, Sile," remarked Jack, "look at that sky. It's going to be as dark as a pocket."

"Looks like rain," said Sile; "but didn't you hear the sergeant? He said we're to get out o' this place, storm or no storm."

"The wheat's all right, anyhow," said Jack.

"I reckon we'll get to Sandusky."

At that moment Jim Waller was untying Private Bellew, of the British army.

"Bellew," he said consolingly, "your time's come. You'll be outen your mis'ry. We can't keep you here no longer."

"I say it's bahbrous!" expostulated his unfortunate victim. "I'm willing to give my pahrole. I am, indeed! I'm not any kind of Injin, and I ought not to be treated like one. You are sahvidges!"

"Come along!" said Jim, sternly. "If

there isn't time to burn a man, you know, we can drown him."

Bellew was led along, glancing furtively in all directions for signs of fire, but his real destiny was water. He believed, the next minute, that he saw the lake coming after him, and he hardly knew how it came to pass that he was so soon sitting down in the middle of a bark canoe, which was evidently leaving the shore.

"I'd rathah be drowned than buhned!" he was exclaiming, when he heard the voice of Sergeant Nash:—

"Silence, now! Boys! Every boat must take care of itself; but we'll keep as near together as we can. Be ready to run ashore if the lake's too rough. Forward all!"

Then another voice at Bellew's elbow assured him, very emphatically:—

"If you make a loud sound, I'll split your head with a hatchet. Do you hear?"

"I'll not speak," whispered back the captive; but the reason for such a cautionary threat he did not know.

The darkness had come, and with it a

misty, drizzling rain ; but as the boats went out into the lake, every eye on board of them could discern dim lights rising and falling, as lanterns might, if hung to the spars of ships.

"Not more'n half a mile away," muttered Mr. Morgan. "Nash, I don't believe they've seen us. I'd say they couldn't."

"Not so long as we can't make out the hull of a ship," replied the sergeant; "but they may have boats in company. Off yonder are more lights, too. For all we know, it's the whole British squadron. We'll keep 'long-shore, but this is goin' to be the narrowest kind o' gettin' away."

The men were pulling vigorously. There might have been little danger, after all, if the British vessels, for such they must surely be had not been upon a tack which carried them directly toward the canoes of the harvesters.

Something like two miles was paddled, but the danger-distance was evidently lessening, in spite of the fact that the gunboats were not under full sail.

"This next light's gettin' pretty close," said Jim Waller, at last. "Another on 'em's jest behind it, Sergeant."

"Stop rowin'," said Nash, and his signal whistle sounded. "Let 'em go by!"

A few strokes landward were made, indeed, and then one, two, three, the clouds of canvas and the dark-looking, dangerous hulls went plunging past.

"Boat ahoy!" called out a voice from the last of them, but there was no reply sent.

A long, anxious minute, and then the sergeant whistled the signal to pull on again.

"Father," said Jack, "do you s'pose they saw us?"

"Yes, they did," said Mr. Morgan. "They'll take a hunt for us, too. Our chance would be better if it would rain harder."

"The blacker, the better for us!" said Nash.

CHAPTER XIV

The Old Six-pounder

“**H**ALT! who goes there!” rang sternly out from the shore near the mouth of Sandusky River, the harbor landing-place.

“Nash, and the men from Morgan’s Cove!” came back out of the gloom. “All here! Hurrah for the wheat!”

“Come ashore, Nash! Hurrah! Glad you brought your skelps with ye! the fort’s all right!”

Perhaps it was; but there were circumstances to be taken account of.

The Miami River, below Fort Meigs, was entirely under British control; but the harbor of Sandusky had as yet received only occasional visits from the enemy’s cruisers. It might be about to have another of more importance, for the gunboats from which the Morgan harvesters had so narrowly escaped were the naval part of a well-planned mili-

tary expedition. General Proctor had at last discovered that the force at his disposal, especially his artillery, was insufficient for the reduction of the fortifications on the Miami which General Harrison had now made so strong and complete. Moreover, it was impossible to provide rations for so many Indians, month after month. A retreat to Detroit and Malden had become necessary; but at least one hard blow might still be struck by the worn-out, baffled commander. He knew the weakness of the garrison at Fort Stephenson. If that fort could be captured by a sudden dashing attack, England would possess an important stronghold on the southern shore of the lake, from which future operations could be directed. Why so obvious an advantage had been so long neglected, is one of the many military enigmas of the curiously managed War of 1812.

In the dark, and over the tossing waves which the storm was raising, the successful wheat reapers had pulled on to their destination, and the shouts which now welcomed

them aroused every living soul in the fort. Out of his canoe sprang Jack Morgan, as it touched the beach, and away he went on the run, dodging a dozen or more of eager questioners as he went. He did not make out to reach the barracks, however, for he was seized and completely captured, halfway.

“Jack! Darling! O! I’m so glad! I couldn’t go to bed.”

“Mother! We are all safe! We cut the wheat and ricked it. It’s tiptop! We had some fighting, too.”

“Tell me everything.”

He went on to do so, and his father, with Sergeant Nash, was doing the same thing for the benefit of Major Croghan.

The young commander listened in silence, asking few questions, and at the end of it he quietly remarked:—

“I’m glad you lost no men. They will all be needed here in a few days.”

“Are you expecting an attack?” asked Mr. Morgan. “Is there anything new?”

“Yes,” replied the major, “I’m getting ready for one. I’ve hardly any doubt that

it's about to come. General Harrison's messages are full of warning. He is entirely cut off, just now, from sending any more."

"This fort can't stand against heavy artillery," remarked Mr. Morgan.

"They can't bring any through the woods," said the major; "but they might by way of the lake. Their larger vessels can't come in far enough to bombard us, though, or they'd knock us all to pieces."

The talk ended there, and Mrs. Morgan was waiting for her husband. With her, now, were Mrs. Jennings and Betty Stowell, so that there was soon quite a gathering of families and old neighbors. The sun had risen, and it was breakfast time before the news-telling was over. There was really something like cheerfulness, for the time, in spite of the known perils of the situation. It was as if the presence of danger had become a matter of course, and all sorts of people, old and young, were hardened to it, so that they could laugh and seem undisturbed, even while they discussed the increasing probability of an attack near at hand.

It was really coming, and General Harrison's warning had been well sent, but Pohig was waiting in vain for any more despatches. None could come, and he could not just then have ventured an attempt to carry any. Scouts from Fort Stephenson, who came in that day and the next, reported all the forest full of Indians. The fact was, that more than half of General Proctor's force was now encamped between Sandusky and the Miami, to prevent the sending of reënforcements to Major Croghan.

It was hardly to be supposed that he would make any serious resistance to such a force as was to be sent against him. It was to consist of about five hundred British regular troops, with eight hundred Indians, and three six-pounder cannon. These were to assail the fort on the land side, while two or three gunboats were to operate in the bay.

After all was ready, the arrival of General Proctor's force was actually made with the suddenness and concentration which might be required for a dash and a sure victory.

It was on a Saturday evening that Jack and Jim Waller were at the landing, making an inspection of their own canoe. She had needed repairs, and these had been skillfully given her.

"She'll do," said Jim. "Tell you what, I want to get out o' this place, soon's I can. All the men are as tired as I am o' bein' cooped up behind a stockade."

"Jim, did I tell you?" replied Jack. "Father says I may go and take a look at Captain Perry's ships," — but he was at that moment gazing lakeward, and the rest of his reply was a little mixed.

"One, two, three of 'em. Jim, they're tack-
ing in around the point!"

"I see 'em," said Jim, rising to his feet and looking. "Why, those ain't any o' Perry's ships; they're British. They come along every now and then. I don't see what for, either."

"The lubbers haven't a gun aboard that can reach the fort. We couldn't send 'em a pill if they had."

Right behind them stood Pohig, telescope

at eye, closely criticising the strangers in the offing.

"I say, Pohig," said Jack, "we could run to Presque Isle in this canoe of mine."

"No!" said the Narraganset. "No canoe. I'll make the run in the *Polly*. Run away from those lubbers any night."

"Where's your boat now?" asked Jim.

"'Bout two miles east, inshore," said Pohig. "Took her there three nights ago. Waitin' orders. Whoop! Look! Those lubbers are anchoring in the bay!"

Away he wheeled, and the two others went with him, for he said:—

"Pohig tell Major Croghan. Bad weather."

They found him at the other side of the fort, and he listened to Pohig's report with a cloudy face.

"I know what it means," he said. "Every soul must come inside the fort. All the scouts and patrols must be called in. We won't be taken by any surprise."

The anchoring gunboats had really prevented that, if any such thing had been intended by General Proctor.



“WHY, THOSE AIN’T ANY OF PERRY’S SHIPS;
THEY’RE BRITISH!”

Hardly any movable property at Sandusky remained to be carted or carried in, but there were settlers and their families, and several parties of men were on outside duty. The night that followed was nevertheless a busy one, and the last preparations were made with anxious care. There were wakeful eyes watching for the dawn of Sunday, August 1, but it seemed to come peacefully. An hour went by, and breakfast was eaten, and all was still. It may even be that the approaching foe had been disappointed at not finding anything to strike at as they drew near.

It was at about noon when, from out the covering forest, from behind bush-bordered fences, from all directions at once, there burst a swarm of yelling, whooping savages. Shortly afterward, moving steadily on from the westward, could be seen the glittering bayonets of the British infantry.

"Mother," said Jack, as they stood together at the stockade, looking through loopholes, "there they are; but I don't believe they can take the fort."

"O dear!" she said. "What a dreadful thing war is! We never did any of them any harm, and they've come to murder us."

"Courage, Sarah!" said her husband. "We may be able to fight them off."

It was hard for anybody in Fort Stephenson to muster hope or courage just then. Steadily, brilliantly, the well-drilled soldiers of England marched out into the open and halted. Then their artillery swung into position, and its gunners began to find the range.

"There it comes, father," said Jack. "It was just so at Fort Meigs, only there was more of it."

The three British sixes spoke at once, and there was another roar, to which less attention was paid, from the gunboats in the bay.

"Lubbers too far away," said Pohig.

The one solitary report that answered from the fort sounded feebly enough, but the ball from it killed a British gunner.

"Our time has come!" muttered Major Croghan. "One hundred and sixty men

and boys to hold the fort against such an attack as this! Well, it's what we must do, or all this place'll be a slaughter-pen."

One more volley came thundering from the battery, and then a British officer marched forward, bearing a flag of truce. He was met at the gate by Major Croghan himself, to whom he delivered a message in writing from his commander.

"Sir," said the major, after slowly reading, and with a flushed, desperate expression upon his handsome face, "I am informed that unless I surrender at once, the fort will be taken by storm and no quarter will be given. You may say that if Fort Stephenson shall be taken, it will be after there are no longer any living men to defend it."

"Will you please put your answer in writing?" said the officer, politely.

"Yes, I will," said the major, "so I can keep a copy of it. A surrender to General Proctor would only mean another affair like that at the Raisin."

The Englishman's face reddened, but he was silent, and Croghan went to his quarters

to write his indignant reply to the atrocious threat of the British commander.

Away then went the flag of truce, and there was a long lull before the cannonade began again. All the while, however, the British infantry were extending their lines beyond rifle range, and Tecumseh's warriors were creeping into nearer covers. Some of them succeeded in reaching shelters from which they might practise sharp-shooting at the loopholes; but they were not doing any harm, and the answering shots proved that sometimes weeds and bushes were not so good a protection as seasoned oak and hickory logs.

"Good!" grunted Pohig, as he saw how little impression a six-pound ball made in striking the stockade. "No go through bulwark. Shoot all day, and no sink fort. Lubbers shoot too high."

The British artillery practice was not very good, indeed. It continued somewhat industriously, nevertheless, and seemed to improve toward sunset. As to the gunboats, Pohig's contemptuous estimate of their importance

seemed to be halfway correct, but they succeeded in doing some damage here and there.

Having at last obtained the range, as it seemed, the British gunners worked on, after nightfall; and they did about as well as in the daytime. At about midnight Major Croghan was inspecting ruefully the condition of his defences at the northwestern angle of the fort.

"They mean to make a breach right here," he said to a fellow officer. "If they take time enough, they can do it. Then we must die!"

"So will some of them, I think," replied the comrade, bravely. "Oh! for more guns!"

"Harrison had none to give us," said the major, sadly. "None could be sent us by way of the lake. We must fight it out."

At that hour, in a log prison at the end of one of the long barracks, lay a man, who may have recently had a friendly visit from Jim Waller.

"This is 'orrible!" he groaned. "The 'eartless sahvidges 'ave taken away me red coat and me army 'at. The fort's to be

taken by storrum. There's to be no quarter, and I'm to be skalluped by Tecumseh's Indians, for all the world as if I were no better than a Yankee! There's no 'ope for me."

His condition was sad, indeed; but no harm befell him during that night.

When daylight came, it was once more evident that the British guns were concentrating their fire upon the already half-ruined northwestern angle. Here the stout tree trunks were splintering rapidly, and a dangerous gap was making. Even the women came to look at it, and to shiver and turn pale.

"Betty Stowell," sobbed poor Mrs. Morgan, "they can get in at that place."

"Major Croghan!" screamed Betty. "Why don't you chuck that hole full of stuff? Hay and dirt'd be better'n nothin'."

"That's what I'm going to do, madam," replied the major, whether or not the idea came first from her.

Immediately scores of eager workers, careless of cannon-balls, were heaping the inner face of the shattered stockade with bags of

flour and meal, bales of hay, and rubbish of all sorts. Into such a mass as was made, shortly, a great deal of British iron might be thrown, without increasing the gap.

"Sile," said Jack, as they stood near a sort of embrasure in the strongly built block-house, at the northerly angle of the fort, "how could a fellow climb up out of that ditch and get over the stockade?"

"I reckon he'd better bring his best ladder with him," said Sile, "and he might get himself shot, a-climbin'."

"They'd better not try it on," said Jack. "I see what the ditch is for, now."

Perhaps he did, but the British commander had apparently failed to do so. He had deliberately determined that his brave soldiers were now to charge into that ditch and climb that tall stockade, or force their way through the few openings which had been made in it by his artillery.

Major Croghan was at the opposite side of the fort, watching what looked like a new movement among the red warriors, when Pohig stood before him, touching his hat.

“What is it, Pohig?”

“Redcoat come to starboard side, now. Boarders. Pohig see 'em called. Want all hands repel boarders. Want gun.”

“The six-pounder? All right! I had looked out for that. Men! Get the gun to the farther blockhouse! Quick! The British are going to do just what I hoped they would. Hurrah!”

Some writers have recorded that a second demand for surrender had been sent that day, but there is a lack of close accuracy in all the accounts which have been preserved. The one thing absolutely certain is, that at this hour the six-pounder thrust its iron nose out at the blockhouse embrasure, altogether unnoticed by the enemy. It was full to the muzzle with slugs, bullets, and nails. Behind it stood Major Croghan, with Pohig as gunner, while Jack Morgan and half a dozen other sharpshooters waited to add their rifle practice to the deadly work of the cannon.

At intervals along that front of the stockade, a few more were watching at the loopholes, but all the rest of the garrison had

been ordered to defend the other parts of the fort from the expected rush of Tecumseh's warriors.

They were making it, now, terrifically, but they made it in Indian fashion, well aware that it was not intended to be the main assault. They were to attract and annoy the garrison until its defences should be broken through by their white allies. They were easily held in check, in spite of their wild whooping, for a hundred and twenty American riflemen were behind the wooden wall in front of them, shooting almost in security. They even fell back, after losing a few too venturesome braves, and waited for a better opportunity.

Five hundred strong, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Short, the British infantry had been massed for the attack, and the defences on that side, viewed from a distance, may have worn a weakened appearance, to justify so rash an attempt to carry them by storm. There were indeed ugly gaps, besides that at the badly broken northwestern angle, and it was not seen how much had been

done for each on the inside. At all events, the assault was now to be made by some of the best and bravest soldiers in the world, well led. If the fort could thus be taken, they could take it, and they came on in magnificent style. Hardly noticing the scattering rifle-shots that struck down a score of them, they rapidly cleared the open space and reached the ditch. But for one thing, Jack Morgan's "long cellar" would actually have been a good protection to them from any musketry at the loopholes above. That one thing was there, however, and it only waited until the ditch was full of them, and they began to clamber up the opposite side, and the stockade. Then the lighted match came down upon the priming of Croghan's six-pounder, and its tempest of death-dealing missiles was hurled among the struggling mass of astonished stormers.

The slaughter was pitiful, and the surprise of it checked the rush long enough for a reloading and a second discharge of the gun, while the few riflemen at the loopholes worked as for their lives. It was said that

Lieutenant Colonel Short, himself, had shouted, "Show them no quarter!" as he led on his men; but it may have been some other voice than his, and he was dead, now.

Back, in wild panic and disorder, fell the British infantry, to be with difficulty rallied by their officers for another attempt. They were indeed brave fellows, for they consented, in spite of their losses.

The din, the roar, the rifle rattle, and the whooping reached the ears of poor Bellew in his barrack prison.

"It's all over with me now!" he groaned. "The fort is taken! The merciless savidges will be hupon me in a minute. - Me end has come. Ah me!"

Minute after minute went by, however, and his hair was still upon his horrified head. His British comrades rallied, formed again, and came forward as recklessly as before; but only one result was possible. Another death storm was hurled among them in the fatal ditch, and they broke once more and fled, too badly demoralized for any further action that day.

The British artillery fire at once began again, with revengeful vigor, as if there was even now no purpose of giving up the capture of Fort Stephenson. Now, however, the garrison, and the women themselves, were breathing more freely. Some of the latter even came for a shuddering look at the gaps and the ditch.

O! such piteous moaning as they heard from the poor wounded Englishmen outside the stockade. It was hot August weather, and wounds meant fever and thirst, added to other pains.

"Betty Stowell!" exclaimed Mrs. Morgan. "We can give them some water!"

"They came to have our skelps taken," was the half-spiteful response. "Good enough for 'em! They're no better'n redskins."

"Yes, they are, Betty," persisted Jack's mother. "I'd help even a Shawnee. Jack! Sile! All of you boys bring water! If we don't help 'em, we're no better'n Indians ourselves. Some of 'em may be real good men, too."

They had been brave enough, whatever

might be their goodness, and the women were doing the right thing. It called for courage on their part, also, for they handed out and distributed that precious refreshment under an artillery fire. Later in the day, by Major Croghan's order, one of the gaps was even made wider, that a party might go down into the ditch and lift out numbers of the wounded men for further care and surgery. In the general excitement, however, such a case as that of private Bellew was entirely overlooked. Not only did he fail to get any supper, but at one moment of apparent silence, a truly awful idea was forced upon him.

"It's all hover!" he exclaimed. "I'm the only one left alive. What if they should buhn the place! I'd then be buhnt alive, right 'ere!"

The night that followed was a dark and anxious one for everybody else, as well as for him. At any moment the attack might be renewed, and with possibly better chances for success. The redmen, especially, would prefer to make their rush in the darkness.

There was little sleeping done, therefore. Men and women sat and listened for the dreaded war-whoop and the shouts of charging infantry. It was a very long night, but the hours went by, and the enemy did not come. Morning dawned at last, and when the sun was up, no sign of further danger could be seen in any direction around the fort. Even the gunboats had vanished.

Had they indeed all gone?

The Americans could hardly believe their eyes at first, and waited to make sure that this was not some cunning stratagem. It was nothing of the kind. The losses of the British infantry had been very serious, and no reënforcements were at hand; but much more disastrous was the disheartened, disappointed state of mind among the red-men. Foiled at Fort Meigs, defeated, as it now seemed, at Fort Stephenson, General Proctor had lost their confidence. His control over them was gone, for the time, and the British Empire had received a severe blow,—from an old iron six-pounder.

CHAPTER XV

Over the Bar, at Last

“MOTHER,” said Jack, on the morning after the departure of the British, “Pohig’s going; you and father are safe, now. You said I might go and see Captain Perry’s new ships.”

“O dear!” she said. “It will be such a terribly dangerous thing!”

The matter was not new. It had been on her mind, day after day, and she had by no means yet recovered from the shock and strain of the defence of the fort. Jack’s face was clouding anxiously, but his father came to his assistance.

“Why, Sarah,” he said, “I think not. Let Jack go and see ’em. I’ll see if we can’t save that wheat, too, while he’s gone.”

“It may be all burnt up,” she said.

“We must find out,” replied her husband. “Anyhow, we promised Jack that he should

go. It will be something entirely new for him. He has never seen anything, in all his life, but woods and deer and Indians."

"Well," put in Jack, "I've seen some forts and armies and fighting, but I want to ride on the first American ship on Lake Erie. I mean to run one of my own on it, some day."

"Yes, Jack, you may go," slowly responded his mother. "I want you to be as far away as you can from Tecumseh and General Proctor."

"They've gone," said Jack. "I don't believe they'll ever come here again."

Hardly anybody else did. General Harrison was now in unrestricted communication with Major Croghan, and there were, therefore, very important despatches to be sent to Captain Perry.

Pohig had been ready all the while, but there was yet another change in his crew. The Miami Indian had disappeared, no one knew whither; and black Charley refused to make another voyage in the *Polly*. It seemed, to his excited imagination, that there was too strong a probability of losing his curly scalp

on the first tack outside of Sandusky Bay. He was not an enlisted man, and could not be compelled to go. The new crew, therefore, was to consist of Skipper Pohig, Jim Waller, Sile Jennings, and Jack Morgan. Jim had eagerly volunteered, and he was a capital boat-hand. The boys had never before handled anything larger than a canoe, but Pohig said:—

“Ugh! Boy good ballast. No too much. Four good rifle in boat. Good!”

It was but two hours after Mrs. Morgan gave her assent that the party for Presque Isle set off along the shore. They did not go alone, for no less than forty riflemen were scouting through the forest, to make sure that the messengers to Captain Perry should get away in safety.

The *Polly* was reached, launched, and her sail was hoisted in perfect peace. On the lake, as on the land, there was no sign of danger, and one reason for it was not known to her crew. The entire squadron of Commodore Barclay had been cruising in front of Presque Isle, to prevent the American

flotilla from coming out. On the 2d of August, the day of the fight at Fort Stephenson, the British commander had accepted an invitation to a grand dinner, to be given him and his officers by the very loyal Canadians of Port Dover. Wearied of acting during so long a time as a kind of cork for a Yankee harbor, he had sailed away across the lake, and so there were no hostile gunboats anywhere near the *Polly*, — or Captain Perry.

Away she went, therefore, with a light but favorable breeze to drive her, and Jack sat at her prow, with a strong feeling that this was about the happiest day of his life, thus far. Jim Waller was acting as steersman, and Pohig was busy with his telescope.

“One canoe,” he said at last, after several hours of good sailing had put many miles of water behind them. “Come this way. Four paddle. One redcoat. Get rifle ready.”

Jack and Sile were ready, without any orders, and the *Polly* did not change her course. It was about the middle of the afternoon, and the wind was freshening.

"We've less'n a hundred miles to run," remarked Jim. "The *Polly's* a clipper."

"Make six knot an hour, now," replied Pohig. "If wind hold, get in to-morrow. Fight canoe. No heave to."

They hardly understood some of his salt-sea phrases, but they knew that the more wind, within certain limits, the better for them. There might be tedious tacking to delay them, but as yet the course they had sailed had been almost straight, keeping out from the American shore only far enough to clear projecting headlands.

These, indeed, had no probable danger in them; but there were known to be islands along the route, and any of these might be the lurking-place of an Indian war or fishing party.

Taking it all in all, they were sailing among unknown difficulties, and a specimen of them might make its appearance at any moment. The boat was one, for instance, now so far away to leeward; but another long mile was sailed before it came perceptibly nearer.

"I say, Pohig," exclaimed Jim, "that there's an island. Ain't those fellers aimin' at the outside of it? If we go through between that and the shore, they mean to nab us as we come out behind it, at the further end."

"Pohig take tiller," responded the Narraganset. "Jim take glass. Beat redcoat lubber this time."

It was a matter of course that the white sail of the *Polly* had been seen. If she was to be captured at all, it was the simplest kind of marine strategy to head her off at the easterly outlet of the channel she must follow, between the long, narrow island and the American shore. Nevertheless, the crew of the despatch boat did not yet understand the whole of the shrewd plan of the British corporal and his four red paddlers. He might well have felt sure of success, for it would have been very sure, if it had not been for the sagacity of Pohig.

"She's less'n a mile away, now," said Jim. "There she goes. She's hid in behind the island, goin' to the far end of it."

"Ugh!" grunted Pohig, very like an Indian. "Jim, wait a bit."

"Well," said Jim, "what'll we do?"

"Keep mouth shut," growled Pohig. "Island good. Show 'em salt water."

It looked, just then, as if he were steering straight for the head of the island, instead of for the inshore channel; but he did not come within good rifle range of it.

"Sile," said Jack, "we're close to it, now. Does he mean to run ashore?"

"Haul sheet!" suddenly commanded Pohig. "Tack! See lubber on shore? Indian? Whoop! Fool 'em bad!"

It was almost as if he had all along seen everything with his eyes, as well as with his cunning. The now hidden British boat, pulling rapidly, had by this time almost reached the easterly end of the island, which was densely wooded. As she did so, sending a signal shout ahead of her, she was greeted by a chorus of yells, and no less than three other canoes put out to join her, all full of redmen and soldiers. It was, in fact, precisely what might have been expected, sup-

posing Commodore Barclay to be in his right mind. He had stationed an ample outlook to intercept just such news-carriers as the *Polly*. The men on the island, and those now in the canoes, were evidently under the direction of an officer outranking the corporal in the patrol boat first seen. As the latter drew nearer, he shouted:—

“All right, Lieutenant. Yankee boat sighted. She’s in the channel, now. We can take her. Four men.”

“Humph!” muttered the officer. “The fools dodged Syme to run their noses into a trap, did they? I don’t know, though. The Yankees can fight. Why didn’t they? Perhaps they mean to take to the main shore. We’ll have to be quick with this thing. Forward, all! Into the channel! Meet them halfway! No quarter, men. Down with ’em!”

On dashed his entire force, therefore, at the very moment when Pohig was tacking straight out into the lake. He was running almost before the wind, too, and he was killing a mile very rapidly. That was not all,

however. There had been, as he had seen, an outlook posted at that westerly point of the island, although the rest of the British boats had been kept elsewhere, for better concealment. This was one thing that had been first surmised and then detected by the skipper of the *Polly*. His sudden change, of course, may have occasioned over haste, too, for at this moment there began a rattle of musketry from among the trees and bushes on the island shore.

"Lubber waste lead," remarked Pohig. "Show 'em, now!"

"Don't we go it, Jack?" shouted Sile.

"She's a racer," replied Jack. "No canoe-load o' sojers can catch her."

Not any such canoe was at once coming after her. The very sound of the useless firing had further convinced the lieutenant that his expected prey was running into the channel for certain destruction.

His men were pulling their best, while the island itself shut out from view the escaping *Polly*. She gained a full knot, then another, and then, as the British boats actually reached

the westerly end of the channel, Pohig calmly tacked again and kept on his old course, as if nothing had happened. He was well out in the lake, moreover, and when the disappointed British officer pulled in to hear the report of the shooting party, at the head of the island, there was no longer any possibility that his swiftest canoe could overtake Major Croghan's messenger to Captain Perry.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "Pohig beat 'em. They'd ha' scalped every one of us."

"That's jest what they'd ha' done," replied Jim. "The worst of it is, that we didn't make out to spot one on 'em."

"No!" said Pohig. "Too many lubber. Glad we got away. Coast clear, now."

It had, indeed, been a narrow escape, and he and his crew had been giving a very good specimen of the many boat skirmishes which from time to time had taken place on the lakes. All of them put together, however, had been as nothing in comparison with the really tremendous water warfare which Commodore Chauncey and his able assistants had recently directed on Lake Ontario. He had

gained a very fair degree of control of that "inland sea."

The British boats pulled sullenly back to their island hiding-place, but the cruiser they had been so sure of taking was almost out of sight.

Night came on, clear, starlit, warm, and the only disadvantage that came to the *Polly* was a dying out of the wind at a little before dawn.

"Good run!" remarked Pohig. "Wind gone. Take oars. Pull in close to Presque Isle. Keep inshore."

"What if we sight a British ship?" asked Jim. "They're around here."

"Ugh!" said Pohig. "Beach boat, then. All right now. No sail in sight."

Why this should be so, was a problem for them to discuss, as they somewhat reluctantly took to the oars. They could not account for the absence of Commodore Barclay's squadron; but this was the morning of August 4, and the merrymaking British commander was still at Port Dover. That he had not left at least one broadside

bearing upon the bar at Presque Isle astonished higher American naval authorities than Pohig. He was gone, at all events, and the *Polly* drew near her destination in perfect safety.

"Jim!" suddenly exclaimed Pohig, looking through his telescope. "Whoop! All Cap'n Perry 'quadron out at bar! See flag! We go right in, now."

He handed the glass from one to another, excitedly, for him, all the while growling salt-sea nautical encomiums upon Master Commandant Perry, and objurgations upon the British "lubbers," who might yet possibly interfere with his operations at Presque Isle.

"Sile," said Jack, holding the telescope with hands that trembled, "our flag is on 'em all! Don't I want to get aboard of one! Hurrah!"

The absence of Commodore Barclay might be a mystery, but the situation was plain enough, as they pulled nearer, especially to Pohig.

The lighter vessels of Perry's fleet, schoon-

ers, and brigs were actually out over the bar, ready to afford very efficient protection to whatever was yet to be done there. They were understood to be quite equal to anything less than Barclay's entire force which had carried on the blockade. A little distance inside the bar floated the great scow-camels, and Pohig kindly explained what they were for, as far as his crew could understand him.

Upon them had already been conveyed to the outer beach the guns and heavy stores of the *Lawrence* and *Niagara*. Hundreds of busy hands had then unladen them, and the camels were once more empty tubs. Even while the *Polly* was making the rest of her way in, they had been brought to either side of the *Niagara*, that great beams, the trunks of trees, might be placed upon their decks and passed through the cabin windows from scow to scow, for the proposed lifting of the great brig.

It was while these cross-beams were going through that the *Polly* arrived within hail of a cruiser. It was the gunboat *Porcupine*, recently built at the Presque Isle shipyards.

“Boat ahoy! What boat’s that?”

“Pohig!” responded the Narraganset. “Despatches. Master Commandant Perry. Gen’l Harrison. Hurrah! Big victory! Fort Stephenson!”

“British and redskins licked out o’ their boots!” roared Jim Waller.

“Killed hundreds of ’em!” shouted Jack.

Loud cheers arose from deck after deck, as the good news passed along, enthusiastically, and one small boat came dashing swiftly toward the *Polly*. In it a tall, handsome young fellow, wearing an undress naval uniform, was standing erect and cheering.

“It’s the commodore, I reckon,” muttered Jim. “Hats off, boys. But jest look at Pohig! See him grin!”

They had seen him smile, somewhat sarcastically, several times, but never before had they seen his dark face widen with delight, as it was doing now. At the same time, he was unbelting himself, to get at his precious despatches. He did not touch his hat, exactly, for that was lying on the bottom of the

boat, and not a word did he utter, at first, when he delivered the papers.

"I'll read them by and by," said Perry, thoughtfully. "They'll keep an hour or two. Tell me about Fort Stephenson."

Pohig was caught, for once. Whatever else he could do, afloat or ashore, he did not know how to describe that affair.

"Long yarn, sir," he stammered. "Major Croghan beat 'em off. Bad! Knock 'em all to pieces. Ask Jim. Ask boy. Jack tacked over to Fort Meigs. Saw fight there."

"You saw it all?" asked the captain of Jack, turning at once to him, as if he were already aware of the Narraganset's lack of reporting faculties.

"Yes, sir. I'm Jack Morgan, sir," answered the young messenger, with a bashfully crimson face. "Father and I were with the harvest party that rescued Pohig when he got there. I was at Fort Meigs when General Harrison whipped Proctor. But this last fight at Fort Stephenson was awful!"

There he broke down for a moment; but the young commodore knew how to ask

questions, and before long he had obtained a pretty clear account of whatever had occurred of importance. It included particulars of the manner in which Pohig had now brought the *Polly* back to Presque Isle. It was listened to by Perry with a brightening face, and well it might be. He had learned how entirely the condition of affairs had changed and improved at the other end of the lake, and that the army was now free to coöperate with him.

His own work was pressing him, now, however, for the placing of the beams had been completed, the plugs had been taken out of the bottoms of the camels, to let water in, and the operation needed watching. Pohig explained to his comrades why the two scows were sinking so rapidly. Down they went, until their decks were nearly level with the water, and then timber supports were placed under the ends of the beams. After that, as the water was pumped out of the scows, their great buoyancy raised the *Niagara*, and she floated forward upon the bar, running aground as she did so.

"Not enough!" growled Pohig. "Brig want more water."

So she did; but a repetition of the operation carried her over, and she was towed at once to an anchorage near the beach, where she could begin to receive her stores and guns.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "I say, Sile, isn't she a big one?"

Sile stared hard at the *Niagara*, but he did not say a word.

The lifting of the *Lawrence* was to follow now, but Master Commandant Perry could take time to read his despatches. Pohig was ordered to take his boat and crew on to the boatyard and their quarters. Away they went, therefore, receiving cheer after cheer on account of their good tidings, and more than one of the many other boats that were coming or going halted them long enough to obtain better ideas concerning the western victories.

Such they were; and General Harrison's whole campaign was to be taken into account, the long-continued skirmishing being

added up as the most important part of the winning. The net result had been a thorough disabling of the British-Indian army. Never again would General Proctor be able to gather so strong a force as that with which he had failed to break through the sternly defended lines of General Harrison along the Miami of the lakes.

It was late that day when the commodore lowered his telescope, after a long and anxious search for British sails upon the lake, and exclaimed to an officer standing near him:—

“Yarnall, my boy! The *Lawrence* is over, too. We must make short work with the guns. There’s no telling how soon we may have to use them.”

“Pretty soon, sir, I hope,” responded Lieutenant Yarnall. “But what can have become of Barclay?”

“We have something to thank him for, anyhow,” laughed Perry, and the work of preparing the two brigs for action went forward with feverish rapidity. It was finished late in the night, so far that the Ameri-

can squadron could lie at anchor in position to repel whatever attack might come.

As for Jack Morgan, he had spent all his waking hours among the shipyards, and his head was full of navies of all sorts, particularly that of England. On the whole, he was half disposed to quarrel with Pohig for the almost contemptuous manner in which the Narraganset spoke of the "No ship! No ship! Brig, schooner, gunboat," which appeared to Jack's eyes such monsters of naval architecture.

"Jack see fifty gun-ship, some day," he was told. "Sebenty-four. Lake too small."

Many another pair of eyes had been as full of admiration and wonder as those of Jack and Sile. Black men and women came to stare and laugh and chatter. Indians from several friendly tribes were there, wandering along the shore or pulling out in their canoes to mutter:—

"Ugh! Ugh! Heap big canoe!"

Brawny frontiersmen with their wives and children had walked or wagoned to Presque Isle from even considerable distances to en-

joy a show so altogether unprecedented. Perhaps, however, the eyes that saw with the keenest appreciation were those of Perry's officers and sailors, so many of whom were soon to lie in their own blood upon the decks of those very vessels.

CHAPTER XVI

The General and the Commodore

“THE Yankees are over the bar!”

IN one form of speech or another, that was the exclamation which burst from one after another of several hundred astonished Englishmen, on the morning after Commodore Perry's camels had carried their burdens out of the harbor.

Commodore Barclay had attended the merrymaking at Dover, and he had returned to discover that, for the first time in history, the American flag was prepared to dispute with that of Great Britain, the mastery of Lake Erie. He had not anticipated the all but superhuman energy which had taken the two large brigs over the bar in a night and a day. Neither was he just then in condition to risk a general engagement with what was really a superior force. Neverthe-

less, the two squadrons were in full sight of each other, at long cannon-range.

"Pohig," exclaimed Jack Morgan, on the after-deck of the *Lawrence*, "the fight's begun! The British are firing!"

"Ugh! No!" replied the experienced Narraganset. "Lubber sheer away. See? Starboard tack; no come nearer."

"That's so," remarked Sailing-master Dobbins, standing near them. "You've a good eye, Pohig. But we ain't any more ready'n they are. We've a load o' things to do before we can clear for action. Let 'em blaze away."

So they did, for an hour or so, and the Americans' guns answered them, for form's sake, but no harm was done on either side, and the British ships sailed westward, leaving their antagonists at anchor.

"They won't come near us again," remarked Perry to Yarnall, "until they can get the *Detroit* ready for sea. She must be nearly finished, now. They will need all her guns, and more, too. What we need is more men."

Volunteers, like Jack and Sile and Jim, had been willingly accepted, but every vessel of the squadron was short-handed. The *Niagara*, especially, had almost no crew at all.

Day followed day, and every hour was full of work. More guns were going on board, here and there, and there is always much to do with the rigging and spars of newly launched vessels.

The 9th of August came, and with it a tremendous reënforcement, for Master Commandant Elliot arrived with a hundred men, to go on board the empty *Niagara*.

"Jack," said Pohig, "see? Boy bring rifle on deck, pretty soon. Elliot get ready in two day."

"I reckon everybody else is ready, now," laughed Jack. "Jim and Sile are."

"Ugh!" said Pohig. "Three landlubber. Cap'n Perry muster in marines."

Jack had already learned what the marines were on a war-ship, but he considered himself almost a sailor.

Pohig was nearly correct, however; for on

the 12th the anchors were up, and the entire squadron was sweeping gallantly westward.

"Sile," said Jack, "Jim says this 'ere's a kind of hunting party. We're to scout on around the lake till we find 'em."

"Look!" replied Sile, pointing at the long array of swelling sails and fluttering flags. "Isn't it splendid?"

Others must have felt as he did, for a round of cheers that arose on the *Lawrence* was taken up by crew after crew, and from each vessel a thundering cannon-salute rang out in honor of what every man believed to be the capture of Lake Erie by the United States.

The actual taking was yet to be done, and many of the voices which joined in the cheers that morning were to be silent forever when the British flag went down.

The course of events on the land had been almost as if General Harrison and Commodore Perry were in hourly communication. The general's cautious campaign continued to succeed, while the troubles of the British commander increased. Fevers and agues

had thinned the ranks of his British veterans more than had the rifles of American sharpshooters. His fickle, untrustworthy savage allies were wearied by the delays and disheartened by their losses. It was of no further use even to threaten the American lines at the Miami, and the British army was now in full retreat to Detroit and Malden, dwindling away as it went.

All peril had passed away from the little garrison at Fort Stephenson. It was also entirely safe for settlers to return to their homes, whether or not these had been burned during their absence. One of the first fruits of this improved state of affairs was the thrashing out and bringing to Sandusky of Joshua Morgan's wheat.

"Sarah," said he, triumphantly, "I was right. It's full forty bushel to the acre. Now! Sixteen hundred bushels at a dollar a bushel. We'll build a better house this time. I'll help old Stowell and Jennings, too. This part o' the country'll be safe to live in."

"O dear!" she replied. "Of course I'm

glad enough about the wheat, but I want to see Jack! What if he should be on board of one of Perry's ships, in a battle!"

"My dear," he said, "then he'd be just where he ought to be. I'd like to be there myself. The commodore is short of men. Every American boy is a man about these days. General Harrison'll be here pretty soon, and there are hundreds of fellows with him that are but little older than our Jack. Some of 'em are not as good shots as he is, either."

"He might get hurt," she said. "O dear! I wish the war were over."

Jack himself had been thinking a great deal about his rifle-shooting, but he had discovered that a sea-fight is not supposed to depend largely upon what Pohig called the "marines." Every day, after putting to sea, the men under Perry were drilled and exercised in the handling of cannon, for it was new business to most of them. It was reported that they numbered less than five hundred, all told, upon nine vessels of several kinds. Perhaps not more than a fourth

of them were old salts from the regular navy, but these could give instructions to the new recruits and the volunteers.

It was understood that the squadron under Commodore Barclay was to carry a somewhat larger number, with the advantage that most of them were experienced sailors.

Taking all things into consideration, the coming combat was not to be unfair as to the relative forces, but Commodore Perry fully believed that he had prepared for victory. He had done so through long months of delays and difficulties, bitter frosts, burning heats, sickness, and disappointment.

His very brave and able antagonist, on the other hand, might well have complained that the naval and military authorities of England had left him on the water and Proctor on the land to fight for the Empire of the West without adequate means. Even the slow-moving Congress of the United States had done much better. They had actually given to Chauncey and Perry the needful money, guns, and supplies, — after a while.

The armament of the *Lawrence* consisted of two long twelve-pounders and eighteen short thirty-two-pounders. That of the *Niagara* was the same. Either of them was more than a match for any single ship of the British squadron at a range which would permit the use of her shorter, heavier guns. Beyond such a range, nevertheless, they were only two-gun brigs, and that fact was to have serious consequences. Somewhat the same thing was true of other of the American vessels, and Commodore Barclay would have an important superiority in long-range cannon.

Jack Morgan knew nothing of all this, and he wondered why Pohig should growl as he did over those magnificent thirty-two-pounders.

"Short nose!" he heard the Narraganset mutter, again and again. "Drop shot in water. Perry lose ship. Pohig hate short gun! Ugh!"

The American squadron sailed on, without a glimpse of anything that carried the red-cross flag, and on the 13th Jack came on

deck at daylight to turn and shout "downstairs," as he still called all below the deck:—

"Sile! Jim! Sandusky in sight! Fort Stephenson! Hurry up!"

Almost at the same moment, Commodore Perry was met on the quarter-deck by Lieutenant Yarnall, with:—

"Suspicious sail sighted, sir. I've sent the *Scorpion* after her."

"Every sail, Yarnall. Every sail!" quickly responded his commander. "It may mean Barclay's fleet."

Signals were promptly made, and the stranger, a mere scout-boat, was closely chased, but Jack had small enthusiasm for that business.

"I did so want to get ashore," he said to himself. "I want to see mother, and I want to know if father got in that wheat."

His chance for an immediate landing had escaped him, however, and he was a sailor-prisoner on board the *Lawrence*, while his mother waited for him, and even his father expressed strong disgust at seeing the squadron sail away.

The saucy scout-boat escaped from her pursuers by running into shoal water among the islands. All the American vessels could then do was to tack away into the open lake, almost under bare poles, driven by a sudden and furious storm of wind and rain. It was afterward even deemed best to come to anchor off Sandusky.

The sun rose brightly enough, two mornings later, but the prospect for a sea-fight seemed as far away as ever. The *Lawrence* lay quietly at her anchorage, and Jack was leaning over the rail, looking wistfully landward. Many boats were coming and going, and he was watching them with a curious idea that he would rather be in one of them than even in the commodore's flag-ship.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, the next minute, as he stared at a canoe which was coming swiftly nearer. "There's Major Croghan! He's coming to see Perry. I don't care — I want to go ashore."

He turned quickly, nevertheless, for a look at the commodore, as he came on deck from below, and was all the more startled by a loud hail that said: —

"Jock! Me b'ye! Here's your father and meself. We've come for ye!"

"Hurrah, Jack!" shouted Mr. Morgan, in the boat. "Your mother and I came all the way from the farm, as soon as we heard that the squadron was here. Get ready to come back with me."

"Father!" shouted Jack; "if the commodore'll let me go."

"I'll see to that," called out Major Croghan. "I'll send you on board again in time for anything he wants of you."

"He may go, Major," was instantly added by the commodore himself.

Almost before Jack knew how it was arranged, he and Sile and Jim were in the canoe, pulling for the shore.

"There'll be boats enough for the major," remarked Mr. Morgan; "but Perry'll want a long talk with him. I don't think he'll sail again until he has seen General Harrison. That may be several days, yet!"

"Father," said Jack, "it seems as if I'd been away for a year."

"That's the way your mother feels,"

laughed Mr. Morgan; "but you needn't spin any sea yarns, just now. Wait and tell it all to her and me when we get there."

Nevertheless, he heard nearly all there was to tell, while Jim and Sile answered the questions of Pat Corrigan. The men at the paddles listened eagerly, and every one of them declared that he was ready to volunteer for service on board those wonderful ships.

"Ye've no need to do that," remarked Pat. "Gineral Harrison'll cut out work enough for ye. Ye're all bettther on shore than ye wud be on the say, I'm thinkin'."

For reasons of his own, Perry was now not asking for volunteers. As he himself explained to Major Croghan:—

"There will be no boarding, I think. It will be an affair of heavy guns. There isn't a ship in either squadron that can stand long pounding. I believe our timbers are heavier than most of theirs. We had to take what we could get, though, and there isn't a seasoned plank or spar on either of the new craft. They are good enough for this brush with Barclay, but they won't last long."

Jack was disposed to be somewhat quiet until he reached the barrack where his mother was waiting for him. His thoughts were all the while busy, however, as he looked around him, on the way from the shore, and after he passed the fort gateway.

"There," he said to himself, "is where the British infantry were posted, before they came on to storm the fort. The redskins were mostly on the farther side and toward Sandusky River. The ditch—how it did look, that day! I reckon I'll never forget how the men threw up their hands and fell over, or how the wounded fellows groaned and shrieked. It was just horrible! I never want to see any such thing again. It couldn't happen in a sea battle. The ship's timbers are like the picketing, and protect the men behind them."

Little he knew of the mischief a cannon-ball may do among the timbers of a ship. Three minutes later, even the ditch was driven out of his mind, for he had reached the barrack door. Sile Jennings had gone to another place on just such an errand.

Jack stepped in, and he heard a sort of scream, and then there was something like a tempest, for a moment.

"Sally Morgan!" exclaimed Betty Stowell, pulling at her arm. "Do stop huggin' of him, and let him speak. I want to hear what he's been doin'. I want to hear about Perry's ships."

"I don't care so much about ships!" she exclaimed; "I wanted to see Jack!"

Nevertheless, she must have had some curiosity, for she calmed down and listened to all he had to say, while a whole lot of other people came slipping in to hear him; for, after all, such news as he had to tell was public property, and ought to be distributed.

He had reached the end of it, and was answering questions, when he heard Jim Waller, at the doorway, calling out: —

"Jack, Polly's here, yet. So's my pony. Come and look at 'em."

"I'd like to see Polly," said Jack; "but I couldn't do anything with her on the *Lawrence*."

"I say, Mrs. Morgan," said Jim, "let him

come for a ride. Some o' General Harrison's Kentuckians are marchin' in. You'd better come along yourself, and take a look at 'em."

"Come on, Sarah," said her husband; "you can have Jack all the evening."

"Go along, dear," she said; "but I didn't sleep a wink during that storm."

Away he went, therefore, with Jim, and they almost ran to the horse corral.

"Jim!" he exclaimed, as they reached it. "There she is! How are you, Polly?"

She evidently knew him, and her loud neigh of recognition was followed by an uneasy stepping around that said very plainly:—

"I've been tied up here too long. Get a saddle and bridle, and let's have a gallop outside of this fort."

No saddle was waited for, but Polly was quickly provided with a bridle and a rider. The stockade gate was open, and the guard knew this pair of volunteers well enough to pass them.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "There they

come! Those are the men that beat the British and Indians at Fort Meigs."

Only about a thousand of them were marching out of the forest into the open, but they were marching very well. Harrison had been drilling them industriously for a battle which he believed was soon to come.

There was even a good appearance of uniform in the new buckskin shirts which had been sent them by the patriotic women of Kentucky and Tennessee, and they were in fine fighting condition. It might be well worth the consideration of any British commander that these men were no longer raw troops. They had become seasoned veterans, equal as soldiers to any other in the world.

"Polly! Polly!" yelled Jack, as she sprang away, "I'd rather be on your back than anywhere else that I know of."

"Don't know 'bout that," said Jim, at his side. "Wait a few days; I want to be on the *Lawrence* when she tries those big guns."

"So do I," said Jack; "but after that I'd rather be with Harrison."

"Well," replied Jim, "it looks as if the British had got away out of his reach. I reckon there won't be any more sharp-shootin' for you and me."

"Then what are all these fellows here for?" asked Jack. "Something we don't know of is coming. If there isn't, I'm going south to join General Jackson."

"That's where I'm goin', anyhow," replied Jim. "Whoop! Ain't I glad to see the woods again!"

He was undoubtedly a forest ranger rather than a sailor; but the sea and land forces of the Republic had at last joined hands and were about to make a long, strong pull together.

The ride came to an end, after even Polly had had enough, and then Mrs. Morgan had Jack all to herself, to make him tell his story over again.

Days went by that were full of expectation and excitement, and at last an order from Commodore Perry called in all of his crews to whom shore leave had been given. Enlisted or unenlisted volunteers, who had

previously served on board ship, were bound to return to duty, and Jack and his friends were once more on the deck of the *Lawrence*. That was on August 19, and a heavy rain was falling. A mist hid the shore when they turned to look at it, and out of the mist came gliding nearly a dozen boats, full of men.

"Look, Sile! Some of 'em are in uniform!"

"Boys!" exclaimed Jim. "It's the general himself, and his staff. Hullo! If he hasn't fetched along a lot of redskins! Reckon they're the friendly chiefs."

It was even so, for Harrison knew how to deal with the redmen. He could not well have made a better impression on their very uncertain minds, than he did by showing them so many "heap big canoe," and the heavy guns. At the same time he touched their pride by giving them a personal interview with the great chief, who commanded such an unheard-of naval armament. Probably most of them had already seen British cruisers; but here was unexpected evidence

that the palefaces, who had baffled Proctor and Tecumseh, were also a power on the water.

They were received on board the *Lawrence* with a great show of dignity, all the chiefs being introduced to the commodore and his officers, in full uniform. Then followed, for form's sake, a kind of grand council, which aided in deepening the intended impression. As for any plan of action to be adopted, however, the general and commodore had already settled all that.

The feathered, painted, bedizened forest chieftains returned to the land. So did General Harrison and his staff; and the next day the American squadron sailed across the lake, on what looked very much like a cruise of defiance. There was tacking back and forth in front of the British harbor of Malden, but no enemy came out, and, on the 27th of August, all the American vessels were at anchor in Put-in-Bay.

"Well," said Jack, "we haven't had any fight, yet, but it's bound to come."

CHAPTER XVII

The Battle for Lake Erie

“**J**OSHUA MORGAN! Do you hear that?”

“Thunder!” exclaimed Betty Stowell.

“No, it isn’t,” said Mr. Morgan, with a gray look gathering on his face. “Sarah, that’s a heavy gun! Wait a moment! That’s it! Come along! Let’s go to the shore. The battle has begun!”

“O dear! And my boy is with Perry, on the *Lawrence*. I want to pray.”

“Pray all the while if you want to,” exclaimed Betty, “but I’m goin’ to get out to where we can hear better. Come on!”

“It’s just about noon,” remarked Mr. Morgan. “They can fight till sundown.”

Out they went, and all the while the roar of the distant cannonade was in their ears, at short intervals. The sound of heavy guns

travels far. It is recorded that for scores of miles the dwellers along the shores of Lake Erie, on both sides, came out to listen anxiously to the reverberation from the greatest battle that ever took place upon the inland waters of America. There will never be another, large or small, for all the prosperous lands and cities on the borders of the lakes are occupied by people who are but dimly aware of anything like separate nationalities.

Jack Morgan was not able to send many of his thoughts ashore, at that hour. He had been on deck at sunrise, Saturday morning, September 10, and he had been staring around, in all directions, thinking:—

“Only our own ships. I wonder where the British are?”

At that very moment he heard the voice of Pohig shouting down from his lookout on the mainmast:—

“Sail in sight, sir! One, two, three, four, five,—six of ’em. Ugh!”

“Barclay’s whole squadron!” exclaimed Lieutenant Yarnall, on the quarter-deck, for

he, too, had a glass at his eye, and was searching the horizon.

The tidings went fast all over the ship, and Commodore Perry himself was quickly on deck, in conference with his officers. Orders were then swiftly signalled to the other American vessels, while all hands on the *Lawrence* were busily engaged in clearing away for action.

What the orders were was all unknown to Jack and his companions. Nearly all they had to do during several hours that followed, was to watch the sailors at their work, and study the movements of the two opposing squadrons. There were nine of the American ships, but owing to the small size of some of them, the mere superiority of numbers did not seem to give any great advantage. Some who afterward wrote about the battle, however, laid undue stress upon the fact that the British carried sixty-three guns, and the Americans only fifty-four, unfairly putting out of sight the very much heavier metal thrown by the American cannon. It was more than five hundred pounds heavier,

if all the guns on both sides had been fired at one volley.

At about ten o'clock in the forenoon, all the American vessels were under sail and ready for action. No doubt their antagonists had also spent the hours industriously.

"What on earth is Perry goin' to do now?" exclaimed Jim Waller.

"I reckon he's goin' to make a stump speech," said Sile Jennings. "All the men are gatherin' to hear him."

They themselves were already only a few yards from the gun-slide which the commodore had mounted, but there was no stump speech for them to hear. Short, sharp, ringing, was the patriotic address of the young hero to his men. At the end of it, he unfolded and held up something he had been carrying in his hand. Slowly it fluttered out upon the wind—a broad blue flag, upon which they might all read, in white letters a foot high, an utterance of the gallant sailor after whom their brig was named:—

DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!

“My brave lads,” shouted Perry, “this flag bears the last words of Captain Lawrence. Shall I hoist it?”

There came back a roar of many voices:—

“Ay, ay, sir!”

Quickly, then, the new banner went up to the mainroyalmast-head, to be read with enthusiasm by the crews of all the squadron. Cheer after cheer arose, to be caught up and echoed by the soldiers of Harrison’s army on the shore; for the hearts of all the riflemen were with their comrades behind Perry’s guns that day. He could have crowded his decks with them if he had needed them.

In a moment more all things had become exceedingly still, in the solemn hush before the battle, and Commodore Perry himself went below for a short time. It was afterward known that he went down to destroy his wife’s letters, and to tie up important papers, weighting them, so that if disaster should come, they might be thrown overboard—not captured.

The breeze was light, but there was enough of it to bring the opposing lines of battle

slowly nearer each other. The British vessels were a beautiful sight to see, and they were handled to perfection. Most of them were newly painted, decked with flags and streamers, and with all their white sails set.

Half an hour went by, and Commodore Perry was once more on deck.

"I can't but just breathe," thought Jack. "Everybody's kind o' holding in. Hullo! What's that?"

A bugle sounded on the *Detroit*, the newly built flagship of Commodore Barclay. It was followed by the music of a full brass band, playing "Rule Britannia," and it was answered by hearty rounds of cheers from the British tars, ship after ship.

"Jack," said Jim Waller, "there's all sorts o' fight in them fellers. This 'ere battle's goin' to be the toughest kind. Hear 'em!"

"Glad I'm here," said Jack; "but it's a good thing that mother isn't where she can see what's coming."

"Look at the commodore!" exclaimed Sile. "Isn't he handsome?"

"He's jest fine!" responded Jim. "The men'll fight hard under him."

There was, indeed, a wonderfully bright, courageous look upon his face, but he was very quiet and easy in his manner and speech. He ordered all the crews to get their rations, now, as there might be no opportunity, later. He passed along from gun to gun, saying cheerful, encouraging words to squad after squad, calling old comrades by name and former service. He may have been asking, inwardly, how many of them would be there to hear him again, at the close of day. He himself might not be there.

"Pohig," asked Jack, at a little before noon, "how far away are they, now?"

"Ugh!" grunted the Narraganset. "Too far. Too long range. Perry want to get nearer. Ugh! Too bad! Gun."

A puff of smoke from the side of the *Detroit* was followed by the thunderous report which had startled Mrs. Morgan in her barrack room at the fort, and the battle had begun.

"I reckon," said Jack, as he listened, "that was a bigger gun than any they pelted us with at Fort Meigs."

He was correct about that, for it was a twenty-four-pounder, and it sent it's warning shot over the *Lawrence*. No harm was done by it. Five minutes passed, and then the same piece spoke again, this time with a better aim, for its ball struck the starboard bulwark of the *Lawrence*, and Jack saw a cloud of splinters fly in the air.

"That's what it can do," he thought. "None of the British cannon at either of the forts made the palisades fly like that."

The American gunboat *Scorpion* carried but two cannon, and one of them was a short-bodied carronade. The other, however, was a long thirty-two, and from this was sent the first response to the fire of the *Detroit*. Whether it hit her or not, nobody knew; but now other British vessels began to use their guns, and as yet the only American ships near enough to answer them were the *Lawrence* and the *Scorpion*, the latter almost out of reach. Instead, therefore, of nine vessels

fighting six, it was two, or hardly more than one, against the three or four who were nearest her, and the *Lawrence* was terribly overmatched. She could not even use her heavier, short-range guns, at the beginning. A quarter-hour went by, and she was suffering severely.

"The commodore had better get out o' this," said Jim Waller, as he saw more splinters flying, and men going down.

"Ugh! No!" replied Pohig. "He's getting to closer quarters. The short noses'll speak, then. Hot fire!"

"This is awful!" groaned Jack, as one of the volunteers fell, dreadfully shattered, at his feet. "Poor fellow!"

"There's worse to come! O my God!" screamed a stricken sailor, as he pitched headlong beside the dead volunteer.

It was no time to stare at them, and the men around Pohig's gun saw hardly anything but their desperate work, as they loaded and fired under his directions. The battle smoke grew denser, and the enemy's guns seemed to thunder nearer, unceasingly.

“Ugh! Good!” said Pohig. “’Trike ’em, now! Double shot-gun! Whoop!”

The long-range guns of the British were not now so great an advantage, but their concentrated fire was rapidly crippling Perry’s flag-ship. The wind died out. The sails hung uselessly upon their spars, and the flags ceased to flutter. Commodore Barclay wisely adhered to his purpose of destroying the *Lawrence*, and he was steadily winning a success. If he could have finished her and afterward have done the same thing for the *Niagara*, he might have gained a complete victory. He was an experienced and capable commander, and the failure of the wind had aided him. There were other reasons, too, why the commanders of the other American vessels were so tardy in getting into action.

Whatever changes were taking place in the positions of ships on either side, Jack Morgan knew nothing of them. He was no sailor to understand what was meant by this order or that. All he could see or think of was the gun he was helping to load

and fire, and the horrible scene around him.

“It’s worse than the ditch at Fort Stephenson!” he exclaimed. “The cockpit (that’s where they take ’em) is full of wounded men. Lieutenant Yarnall’s been down three times. — Pohig!”

Down went the brave Narraganset, his right arm struck off at the elbow.

“Jack!” he yelled. “Fire gun! — Prime her! — Fire! No mind Pohig —”

He fell then, and was carried below, while Jack obeyed him, fiercely, wrathfully. One squint along the sights of the short thirty-two, and then he exclaimed: —

“I saw her! I’ll hit her this time!” Down came his lanyard on the priming, and hardly had the gun spoken, before her young gunner muttered faintly: —

“O dear! There goes Jim Waller!”

“Only a splinter in my leg, Jack,” called out Jim, “but I can’t stand up. Come and take this cattridge for our gun.”

Jack darted to take it, and was back again, but hardly had he put a hand upon his

cannon, before he too was suddenly upon his back.

"Am I killed?" sprang to his lips. "Almost everybody else is. No; I can breathe yet. Why, that's my gun, halfway 'cross the deck! What's happened?"

The gun was killed, not Jack. A thirty-two-pound shot had struck her on the nose and knocked her off her carriage, just as he touched her. The shock had sent him over and almost stunned him; that was all. He could not at once regain his feet, nevertheless, and he stared anxiously around him.

"More guns are ruined," he muttered. "The bulwarks are smashed. Oh, how many dead men!—We are whipped!—O!" At that moment he looked up, and he was not likely to ever forget what he saw. There stood Commodore Perry, speaking trumpet in hand, as calm and resolute as at the beginning. He and his flag-ship, with the *Ariel* and the *Scorpion*, had now borne the brunt of the battle for more than two hours, and the *Lawrence* was a complete wreck. Out of one hundred and three men who

had been on board of her, she had but twenty left fit for duty. Eighty-three had been killed or wounded. Nothing more could be done with her. She was drifting helplessly, hither and thither, without sails or steerage way. There was but one of her boats remaining uninjured, and it was launched. The *Niagara* had now managed to get within reaching distance, and the commodore decided to transfer himself and his flag to her, if it were possible.

Jack had risen, now, and he saw his undaunted commander walk to the larboard side of the brig, followed closely by the severely wounded Lieutenant Yarnall. A few parting orders were given, and then Perry went down into the boat, which already contained his younger brother, James Perry, and four sailors.

"They are leaving us!" exclaimed Jack. "Then what is to become of us? Are our ships all beaten? Is it a defeat? Hullo! What's that?"

It was a token that others beside the commodore did not feel defeated yet. One

of the remaining seamen had pulled down and rolled up the flag of "Don't give up the Ship," and he threw it into the boat with an angry yell. Away she went, into an eddying cloud of powder smoke which hid her from sight for a few minutes. She was almost at the side of the *Niagara* when the British gunners caught a glimpse of her, and a storm of shot was hurled at her. Only one of them hit, a six-pound ball; but the boat would have filled and sunk if Perry himself had not promptly pulled off his coat and crammed it into the hole.

"Isn't he plucky?" shouted Jack. "Hullo! Sile Jennings! Are you hurt?"

"No, not much," groaned Sile. "Something hit my head, and I feel sick."

"O dear!" said Jack. "That's a bad cut. I'll try to tie it up. What will your mother say? I reckon it won't kill you."

"No —" said Sile, and then he fainted away, for the splinter-gash was a deep one.

Commodore Perry was now on his new flag-ship, and not only the *Niagara*, but all the other American vessels, were rapidly get-

ting into good positions for usefulness. It was too late to save the *Lawrence*, but her fire had inflicted more than a little damage upon her assailants. Counting her out, therefore, they were now to be attacked by a superior force, entirely fresh, headed by the *Niagara* at short range.

"We can do no more!" gasped the all but broken-hearted Lieutenant Yarnall. "We must surrender, to stop their firing."

"This is awful!" whispered Jack, as he crouched beside his broken gun, and saw the stars and stripes come down. "We have given it up, and we are prisoners of war. I wonder where they will take me."

The British themselves believed, at that moment, that they had already won the victory, and they were cheering vigorously; but the fight was by no means over.

"Sile," said Jack, "are you feeling better? They've stopped firing at us. Can you get up?"

"No, not yet," replied Sile. "Have all our other ships surrendered?"

"Not one of 'em!" exclaimed a wounded

seaman lying near them. "Captain Perry won't give up while he's alive."

"The wind's helpin' him, now," said another sailor. "He's got the weather gage of 'em. He can bring all his guns to bear. God bless him!"

The breath of air which was getting into the American sails was about all the reënforcements Perry needed, for the *Niagara* was stronger than any single vessel of the British squadron.

"Oh, Pohig!" said Jack, suddenly. "What's become of him? I want to go and see how he is."

"No use, my boy," responded the same brave sailor who had answered before. "He and a lot of others were killed in the cockpit. The whole place was knocked all to pieces. It was the worst death-trap on the brig."

"Poor Pohig! I did like him so!" said Jack. "Where's Jim Waller?"

"Here I am," came ruefully from behind him. "I had my leg tied up, and I crawled back to see whether you and Sile were alive."

It's all over with us, though ; we're driftin' on right between the lines."

The helpless *Lawrence* was no longer a target for British gunners ; but the few who remained on board of her had a good opportunity for watching the remaining course of the battle. This was getting hotter than ever, and Commodore Barclay had no men to spare to take possession of the one American ship which had surrendered. She was left to herself, therefore, and Yarnall, her commander, could give such care as he might to his dreadful list of wounded. He, too, was keeping an anxious lookout, and before long he shouted :—

"Men! Perry is running into close quarters! He is raking the *Detroit*!"

Even the wounded ceased to groan, listening for his next announcement, for some time had already gone by.

"Fifteen minutes of the worst cannonading I ever heard," he said, at last, looking at his watch. "Nothing can stand a fire like that. Hurrah! Boys! Hurrah! The British flags are coming down! Up again

with ours! The *Lawrence* hasn't been captured!"

They could hardly believe their eyes; but it was true. The skilful manœuvre with which Commodore Perry had brought all his force to bear at short range, had produced its reasonably sure result. Several of the British ships had already suffered severely from the fire of the *Lawrence* and her two consorts, and the weight of metal which was now poured upon them was something they had not calculated upon. The *Detroit*, in particular, was quickly disabled. There was nothing left them but surrender. The battle was over.

Now, however, Commodore Perry was once more in a rowboat, leaving the *Niagara* behind him. It may have been merely a feeling of personal pride, but he had at once determined to receive the formal surrender on the deck of the shattered flag-ship which he had defended so well.

"Here he comes," thought Jack. "Our stars and stripes have been sent up again. I wonder if he is wounded."

“My lads,” called out Yarnall, “rouse and come to the side to cheer the commodore.”

From here and there a faint hurrah replied to him, and the poor fellows came, all but exhausted as they were, and stained with powder-smoke and blood. Even such of the wounded as could stand made an effort to come, while others turned painfully over on the deck and half forgot their injuries. Too many of them were little more than wrecks—like the *Lawrence*.

There was a silence instead of cheering when the commodore came over the rail and looked around him. He also stood still, for a moment, gazing sadly at the ghastly scene before him. Then he bowed his head, and walked on to shake hands with Yarnall.

On other of the American ships were similar evidences of the costly nature of the victory, and the carnage and destruction had been fully equal to this on the *Detroit* and some other British vessels.

From all of these, boats were now arriving, with the officers detailed by Commodore

Barclay to perform the unpleasant formalities of the surrender. Commodore Perry waited for them on his quarter-deck. They were all brave sailors, and he treated them with due consideration, handing back to each of them the sword he delivered.

“He is writing something, now,” said Jack to Sile. “I wonder what it is?”

Perry had hastily torn a slip of paper from an old letter-back, and he was making a writing desk of the crown of his hat, while he pencilled a despatch to General Harrison, announcing the result of the battle:—

“We have met the enemy, and they are ours,” he wrote.

“I say, Jack,” whispered Sile, “the whole thing’s over. They’re goin’.”

“Oh, my boy!” came just then, from a low voice at his side. “You are living!”

“Father!” said Sile. “You here?”

“John! John Morgan!” was spoken next, more loudly. “Is it possible? I had all but given up hoping!”

“Father!” yelled Jack. “We had to surrender the *Lawrence* once, but we got away

again. There isn't a thing the matter with me. How on earth did you get here?"

"Jennings and I came in a canoe," he said. "Major Croghan gave us four men to paddle it,—and didn't they paddle! Now! I'm going to take you right to your mother. The commodore doesn't need you any more, here."

"Sile," said Mr. Jennings, "you must come, too. We can cure this cut better on shore than they can here."

He had quickly removed the bandage, to look at it, and seemed to be much relieved by the inspection.

"Father," said Jack. "Jim Waller. There he lies, over yonder. Pohig is dead. Don't forget my rifle; it's down below."

Lieutenant Yarnall was not now on duty, but the officer in charge readily permitted the departure of Jim and the two young volunteers. As quickly as possible they were all in the canoe, leaving behind them the shattered *Lawrence*, now a hospital.

One desperate struggle had broken completely the plan of the British ministry for

the permanent occupation of Lake Erie and the great Northwest. Much had been lost at the rapids of the Miami, Fort Meigs, and Fort Stephenson, on the land, and now the American flag was supreme upon the water.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Shawnee Chief

FERRY-BOATS? That was what they were now to be — all the vessels of the American squadron and all that were captured in the battle or afterward, as soon as they could be repaired for the passenger business.

This would take some time, perhaps, and General Harrison's long list of volunteer passengers were themselves not quite ready for their proposed trip across Lake Erie.

It was believed, however, that neither Detroit nor Malden could be held by the British against a combined attack by the American land and naval forces. Such artillery as the forts at these places possessed would be as nothing at all compared to the broadsides of Perry's fleet — if fifteen warships of all sorts might fairly be called a "fleet."

Jack Morgan was now on shore, acting as a very popular news reporter. He had really a host of things to tell—to his mother and father first, and afterward to a host of eager questioners. Everybody wanted to hear all the details of the great sea-fight. His memories of it, at the outset, were somewhat confused, as if by powder-smoke and the war of guns; but they became clearer as he went on, and he was surprised to find how much he really knew.

“I never want to see anything like it again, though,” he said to his mother. “Oh, how I felt when I saw our flag come down on the *Lawrence*, and when I looked around at the dead and wounded men!”

“I’m so glad that the bullets all missed you!” she said. “Are you very lame yet? Do you feel badly anywhere?”

“Well,” he replied, “sometimes I can feel that jar all over me, but it’s going. Sile’s head is all right, too; but Jim Waller won’t get rid of his crutches for a month yet. But isn’t he mad that he can’t go on with General Harrison! I want to go, if you’ll let me.”

“O Jack!” she said; “what does father say?”

“Well, Sarah,” responded Mr. Morgan, “I want him to see this thing out. It will be better for him all his life. He must do his whole duty to his country.”

“He may go, then,” she said sadly. “All the other mothers have had to let their sons go. The Indians must be beaten.”

She was not thinking of the war as if it were with England. She was a settler's wife, and all her fears for the future were on account of Tecumseh and his allied tribes. These were not now what they had been, however, and the great chief was able to gather only about two thousand warriors to aid his British friends in their last and all but hopeless struggle.

Polly was once more in Jack's possession, and upon her back he made a swift visit to his old home and the wheat-field. He found a surprise ready for him there, and when he returned he had hardly dismounted at the barrack door before he shouted to his father:—

"You didn't tell me a word about it! Why, father, the new house is almost half built! They're roofing the barn."

"Are they?" laughed Mr. Morgan. "Well, I reckoned they were. I want to get back to living there."

"Are you sure it's safe?" asked Jack.

"Of course it is, or I wouldn't go there. The redskins'll never get in again as far as that. I don't believe another war-party'll ever cross the Maumee. Our whole frontier has moved westward."

It was about to drift still farther, for General Harrison's reënforcements were coming in rapidly, full of enthusiasm for him and for the commodore.

News came in a few days that General Proctor had abandoned Detroit, giving up with it the entire peninsula of Michigan, which had seemed to be lost to the United States, at the outset of the war, by Hull's surrender. Chicago was also once more an American post, as soon as it should be convenient to put a garrison into it. That indicated the future freedom of Lake Michigan,

Lake Huron, Lake Superior, and all the far northwest.

"Jack," said Pat Corrigan, one fine September morning, "come along with me. The Kentucky cavalry's here, part of it. The general manes to have it boated over to Canady. Mebbe there's more of it gone by land to Detroit. Get Polly out."

"I'll come," said Jack; "but did you find out what ever became of that chap Bellew, that I caught at our place?"

"Oh, the Lunnoner?" chuckled Pat. "Jim Waller towld me to scare the sowl out of him; but they thraded him an' some more for a lot of our b'yes the redcoats had taken pris'ners. 'I'm not buhnt,' said he, 'and I've saved me skullup.' He towld me we were no betther than sahvidges."

In a few minutes more they had ridden out, side by side, in full view of at least two hundred mounted riflemen; about the most effective part of Harrison's army, for they were all picked men. At their head rode a bearded, fine-looking man, and Pat remarked of him:—

"That's Colonel Johnson, that commands them, and a haard fighter he is."

A strong impulse came hotly over Jack, and he dashed forward as if he meant to charge the cavalry.

"The b'ye!" exclaimed Pat. "What on earth's took him? I'm wid him, anyhow."

Polly was at once sharply reined in, however, in front of the gallant Kentuckian, and there was an eager tremor in Jack's voice, as he said anxiously:—

"Colonel Johnson, may I go with you? This is my horse. I want to ride her into the next battle."

"Sorry I can't take you, my boy," kindly replied the colonel. "We don't want anything but seasoned veterans."

"Ye want owld wans?" exclaimed Pat. "Why, your honor, Jack Morgan's owld enough. It's the b'ye that kerried Major Croghan's despatches through and back again. Then he took 'em all the way to Presque Isle in a boat. He fowt in the battles at Fort Meigs and Fort Stephenson, and he was wid Perry on the *Lawrence*."

He's been wounded twice. Do ye call him a greenhorn? The commodore'll take the powny over the lake for him. You've no betther men than Jack."

"I declare!" said the colonel, laughing. "He has seen smoke! Come along, Jack. I'll take you. I believe it's the boys that are winning this war."

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "Polly! you and I are to be in the next fight."

Polly may have understood him, for she threw up her heels in a way that would have unseated an unskilful horseman, and the colonel remarked:—

"You can ride a kicking nag, too. All right. We want your kind of boy."

There was no great formality in the Kentucky method of taking on one more volunteer, and the two friends were soon back at the fort to report.

"Sarah," said Mr. Morgan, "it's just the right thing. I like having him with Johnson."

"Well," she said slowly, "yes; if he had to get away from anything, I'm glad Polly's such a good runner."

General Harrison's ferry-boats, all that were in good condition, were now doing a fine passenger business. Between the 16th and 24th of September, the greater part of the American army was landed on the Canada shore, unopposed, for all the landing-places were covered by the guns of the fleet, and General Proctor had no artillery fit to reply to that of the commodore. Among the first to get on shore were the mounted Kentuckians, and with these, much disgusted by her sea voyage, was Polly.

"She and I are old scouts, sir," said Jack to Colonel Johnson. "May we go on and take a look at those woods?"

"Well," replied the colonel, "you may go ahead, but we're not quite sure what's in 'em. Keep well away from cover."

There might have been Indians there, but if so, Jack did not discover any. What he did find was that this region was better settled than that around Sandusky Bay. It had been earlier made secure from Indian war-parties. There were many farms, and some very good roads.

It was decidedly a disappointment to the excited cavalry that they could ride hither and thither, in all directions, and find nothing to send a shot at. Perhaps that was counterbalanced, however, by the gratification they felt at carrying the war into the enemy's country instead of merely defending their own.

"I'm in Canada!" thought Jack, for instance. "Isn't this great, Polly? It's a good deal better than being tomahawked in the Ohio woods or scalped at Fort Stephenson. I reckon, though, I was nearer getting killed on the *Lawrence* than anywhere else. The cannon-balls went by me so close, sometimes, that they all but blew me over."

The wind of a heavy shot can do more than merely knock a man down, if it passes him near enough, and Jack's escapes had been very narrow.

About twelve hundred of the military tourists on Lake Erie did not at once land. They were still upon the warlike ferry-boats when, on the 26th of September, the commodore and the general sailed to Malden.

There was nothing for them to do there, for the British had burned the navy-yard, and all of the fortifications that would burn, and had retreated into the country. On the next day Detroit was visited, and an American garrison was again put into the post surrendered by General Hull.

This must have been a gloomy time for General Proctor and his army. The troops were dispirited, the Indians were deserting, and it was known that the American force under Harrison outnumbered anything that could be gathered to oppose it. Nevertheless, whatever had been the errors or misfortunes of the British commander, he had plenty of courage, and he determined to make one more stand against his long-continued tide of ill success. He marched his remaining force to a strong position on the bank of the river Thames. This protected his left, while two thousand Indian warriors under Tecumseh held a dense forest on his right. It looked as if here he might be able to give an enemy a severe reception.

General Harrison himself had been

strongly advised not to attempt so dangerous a thing as pursuit. He replied by calling his officers together, and telling them that he meant to follow the British army until he should find it.

They were more than ready to agree with him. On the 2d of October, some of Perry's smaller vessels were in the Thames, for service as artillery or as transports for such troops as might need to cross over, but there was little more for them to do, now.

Sharp skirmishing began at the front, while Harrison's reserves were marching from the shore encampment, a dozen miles away. No advantages had been gained on either side, but the exact position of the British army had been discovered, and there was a blunder in it, as was soon to be seen.

On the morning of October 5, the Americans moved forward, slowly, along the entire British front. It looked as if they intended engaging at all points at the same time, but that was not General Harrison's own proposal. He held his cavalry back behind his infantry, and there they waited impatiently,

listening to the increasing rattle of rifles and boom of cannon.

"Colonel," asked one of Johnson's captains, "what does this mean? What's got into the general?"

"I think I know," replied the colonel. "Look yonder. Proctor's infantry are drawn out thin, all the way from the woods to the river. No trees. Only stumps and bushes. Not so much as a rail fence to check a charge."

"I want to do something!" exclaimed the excited officer.

"Wait!" said the colonel. "Ready, men!"

At that moment Jack Morgan saw one of General Harrison's aides ride up to the colonel and hand him a piece of paper, saying also a few words that Jack could not hear.

"I wonder what it is," thought Jack.

"I reckon something's coming! Polly! It's going to be the biggest kind of battle. Bigger'n the Maumee!"

A bound, a kicking, and a sharp neigh replied to him. Just as she came down

upon all fours again, Jack saw Colonel Johnson turn and wave his sword.

"Forward!" he shouted. "Hurrah, boys!"

If he said anything more, it was drowned in the wild yells and shouts with which his Kentuckians dashed on behind him. Polly herself was not at all behind, and Jack did not try to hold her in.

"We'll get there as soon as the colonel does," he told her. "Whoop!"

So they did. Wide gaps had been left in the lines of the American infantry, and through these the excited horsemen galloped forward, keeping very fair order after all. Jack felt as if he were all on fire, and Polly seemed to be set on springs.

"We'll go right through them," he thought. "This must be what the general was waiting for. The colonel knew."

It is possible that General Proctor had made his obvious error in ignorance of the presence of cavalry in Harrison's army, but it was too late to mend matters, now. The long, thin line of British veterans stood firm as the horsemen came on. They even fired

an ineffectual volley, but before a musket could be reloaded, the storm of hoofs and sabres swept through them, over them, cutting their line in two at about a third of its length from the woods.

They had no chance to rally or to form in any new order, for the cavalry at once wheeled to strike them in the rear, splitting into two columns to strike in each direction right and left.

Disordered, disheartened, the entire British line was breaking and retreating in utter confusion.

"There come the redskins out o' the woods!" shouted Jack. "Polly, you and I'll stick to the colonel. He's going after them. Hurrah!"

Tecumseh had instantly understood the disaster and was leading a strong body of warriors out to save his white allies. Perhaps it was the best thing he could do, but by it, he left the centre, at the edge of the woods, almost unprotected, and the American infantry charged in at once to occupy it, cutting him off from the remainder of his force.

There was neither order nor efficiency in the blind rush of the redmen, while the cavalry moved well together. The chief himself seemed to be in a dozen places at the same moment, whooping, commanding, encouraging; but in five minutes more all the fighting courage went suddenly out from his whole band of warriors.

"Tecumseh!" yelled Jack. "I'm within twenty feet of him! I wish my rifle wasn't empty. There goes the colonel! What's that?"

He saw Colonel Johnson level and fire a long-barrelled pistol, his eyes flashing fire as he did so. The great chief reeled and fell, and the battle was lost for England when the forest king went down. Jack reined in Polly at the side of the prostrate warrior, and the colonel himself leaned over in his saddle to gaze upon the dark, silent face.

"Gone!" he exclaimed. "There lies the scourge of the whole frontier. The league of the tribes is broken."

"Dead?" said Jack; "Tecumseh dead?"

“Boy!” shouted Colonel Johnson, “ride your best to General Harrison and tell him we’ve killed Tecumseh. The redskins are breaking for the woods. The British are scattered. Their whole line is doubled up! Hurrah!”

Away sprang Polly, as if she had heard the message, and Jack hardly knew whether or not he were breathing, until she brought him face to face with his commander. He knew that he must have delivered his errand then, for the general listened, looking at him with a face that turned deadly pale. Then he was silent a moment, as if in deep thought. After that, he pencilled a few words on a bit of cardboard and said :—

“Ride back with that to Johnson. My soul! I hope he’s too old an Indian fighter to follow them into the woods.”

Polly wheeled away, and, as she did so, Jack heard the general shouting orders to his nearest officers, and all the reserves marched forward.

“I reckon he’s right, Polly,” said Jack. “I saw a good many of ’em.”

Colonel Johnson had anticipated his orders, for he was already holding back his too eager horsemen. When Jack handed him the bit of cardboard, he was busy with a crowd of British prisoners,—about six hundred,—and all he said was:—

“All right! The battle’s over. Send no men into the woods? Humph! We haven’t any scalps to throw away.”

It had all been done with great rapidity, and not many had been killed or wounded on either side. Perhaps more Indians than British had been struck down.

The entire American force was ordered to camp near the battle-field, and the general himself could hardly have been ready to say what his next move ought to be. Neither could Jack Morgan, but he slept like a top after the fatigue and excitement.

He was up early next morning, and he was feeding Polly, when he heard a loud hail behind him.

“You’ve bate thim again, have ye, me b’ye? It’s glad I am to find ye.”

“Hurrah, Pat!” shouted Jack. “The

war's pretty near over, I reckon. We whipped 'em all to pieces."

"So they towld me," said Pat. "But I'm sint to bring yez home. Your mother says you've done enough, and it's me own mind that she's right."

"I'm ready," replied Jack. "They won't need me here any longer. But, Pat, I saw Tecumseh killed myself."

"I hope it's not wrong to say I'm glad he's dead," said Pat. "It's a bloody-handed man he was, make the best of him. I'm glad you'll come with me."

"Soon as I can see Colonel Johnson," responded Jack. "I'm not enlisted."

"You're too young for that, I think," laughed Pat; "but you've been a sojer and a sailor, and now, bless me sowl! you've served wid the cavalry."

Leave for Jack's going was readily given, and there was a gunboat about to sail for Sandusky with orders for Major Croghan. Only a few days later, the three members of the Morgan family were gathered in the pleasant front room of the new house at the cove.

Mrs. Morgan sat with her arms around Jack, as if she were not quite sure that he would not get away again, but he was looking out of the open doorway in front of them.

"Mother," he said, "there's a sail on the lake. She's a two-master. It looks to me like the *Niagara*. My ship's the *Lawrence*."

"Well, Jack," she murmured, "I hope you'll never sail again on a man-of-war."

"No," he said. "I don't want to, either. But I mean to have a ship of my own, some day."

"You won't have to wait a great while for that," said his father. "I'm going in with the Sandusky traders to build a big schooner, between this and next summer. You may call her your boat. One of these days I mean you to be captain of her."

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "Mother, the American flag can sail anywhere, now, all over Lake Erie."

All the lakes were, indeed, free. Soon after that, the war came to an end, and one of its good fruits was a treaty which limited

the naval forces of England and the United States on Lake Erie to one or two small gunboats,—a mere police force. The inland seas were made waters of peace between the kindred nations.

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